

BEADLE'S HALF DIME Library

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Vol. II.

Single
Number.

BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 42.

The Phantom Miner:

OR,

DEADWOOD DICK'S BONANZA.

A Tale of the Great Silver-Land of Idaho.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "WILDCAT BOB," "DEADWOOD DICK,"
"DOUBLE DAGGERS," "BUFFALO BEN,"
"WILD IVAN," "DEATH-FACE, THE
DETECTIVE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

"BONANZA" SHOOTING—OLD FACES IN NEW FRAMES.

EUREKA!
I do not know that you can find it by looking on the map of Idaho; nevertheless it is there—a prosperous little gold and silver-mining town, nestling in the mouth of a gulch of the Salmon river mountains, and fronting westward toward as grand a prairie ocean as ever existed. Some one had cried "Eureka" when the wild tortuous gulch's end was reached; and they had stopped right in its mouth, found abundant mineral resources, and built a city. Not a city of brick or stone, but a city of rude cabins and shanties, which were immediately filled by a population of two or three thousand souls, who rushed in from the other towns, to share the excitement of the new-found Strike.

The width of the gulch-mouth would admit of but a couple or three streets, running intermountainward, but the houses were scattered here and there, wherever a foundation could be planted.

It might justly be called a modern Deadwood City, for it lacks very few of the features of the Black Hills metropolis, while it adds to the striking active drama of real life in the mines.

A rushing, red-hot city is Eureka!

She boasts of the best silver ore and golden sand in the territory; she counts her saloons, hotels and gambling-houses by the score; she has stores, a church (a rare thing to find in a far western mining town), a post-office, and several ore-breakers in full blast; a bank, with a stated capital of half a million, and other branches of industry, too numerous to mention. As in Deadwood, there are men, women, boys and girls in nearly all stages of life, and a few of Eureka's inhabitants may be considered fastidious, whom wealth and refinement has set apart from the main rough mining element.

Wide-awake, active and prosperous is the condition in which we present Eureka to the reader.

Night has fallen over the city; a few pale stars keep a silent vigil overhead, awaiting the coming of the late moon; the air is pure, and pine-scent-

ed, as it is wafted down from the mighty mountains that rear their forest-crowned summits, far, far above.

Down below nestles the city, not in repose, but bustling and lively, with the streets thronged, and the saloons crowded.

A couple of men, evidently new-comers to Eureka, were sauntering along the main street, smoking their cigars, enjoying the invigorating breeze, and watching the restless tide of humanity around them.

Two men opposite in appearance and age, yet apparently great friends. One a young man, with a fresh, handsome face, bold in expression, and magnetic black eyes and hair—the latter reaching below his shoulders; straight, erect form, which hard service in rough western life had toughened, and a bearing fearless and manly to a fault. His dress was black buck-skin, with moccasins fancifully beaded, to match, and a broad-brim slouch hat of the same hue upon his head. Unlike those around him he wore no belt weapons, probably trusting to his hands for defense in case of necessity.

A handsome looking fellow he was, and people naturally stared as he sauntered by.

His companion was a little dried-up individual, well along in years, wiry of form and well developed in muscle—an uncouth, yet comical little fellow, grim of feature and sharp of glance; a man who might be depended upon in friendship or feared in enmity.

He was clad in regular frontier style, and armed with a small arsenal of belt weapons, in addition to a Spencer rifle slung to his back. At his heels trotted, in sullen defiance of the jeers of a crowd of boys, an ugly, vicious creature of the genus *capra*, who seemed to answer the demand for a dog very creditably.

Many were the glances centered upon the trio as they strolled along, by the observing Eurekaites, and when at last they entered a saloon, over whose entrance was the suggestive title of "The Man-Trap," not a few of the Eurekaites went also.

The interior of the "Man-Trap" proved to be slightly more attractive than the exterior, being furnished after a rude fashion with a bar, chairs and tables, and the walls hung with mirrors and none too modest pictures.

It was a whisky-trap and a gaming den combined, and was already filled with excited patrons.

"Come this way, Dickey," said the old man, elbowing his way through the crowd. "We've a right ter hev our say in heer, if ther old court knows hersef." How's this, eh? Begins to luk like Deadwood, don't et?"

"Begins to savor that way, for a truth," replied the young man, a faint smile playing from underneath his slight pointed mustache. "Hardly Deadwood, after all, though."

"Wal, mebbe not, but thar's fun here, as old Cleopatra sed when she tickled a jack-mule in ther left hind fut wi' her needle. Haydoogins o' fun. Arter we onct git a'quainted, we'll be all hunky."

They sauntered around, now and then stopping to watch a game, but finally moving toward a rear portion of the saloon, where a shooting gallery was located.

"Curra! who sez I ain't ther crack shot of Eureka?" bel-lowed one of a crowd who were gathered around the stand. "Seventeen bull's-eyes out of twenty-five, I'm tellin' you."

"Pshaw, Buckskin; you're no shot!" replied the keeper, a young woman somewhere between seventeen and nineteen years of age, and one of the prettiest the two strangers had yet seen in Eureka. "You're a blower; that's your sum total."

"You're a humbug, Noisy Nell," replied Buckskin. "Ye think thar's no one kin shute quite so purty as yerself, an' I allow I can shute clear over you."

"You've just tried, and have a string of shots to pay for, as a result!"

Noisy Nell was very pretty of face and feature, with roscinted cheeks, a small shapely mouth of tempting sweetness; flashing, sparkling, brownish-blue eyes, and hair to match, which swept in an unconfined



DEADWOOD DICK'S ESCAPE.

cloud quite to her waist. Her form was cast in nature's happiest mold, symmetrical and graceful.

She was clad in a silken Spanish dress, low in the neck, sleeveless, and just short enough to expose the pretty ankles and small slipped feet.

Buckskin was a brawny customer, with ruffian clearly written in his dark sinister countenance, and gleaming from his bloodshot eyes.

"I hev a string ter pay, hey?" he replied; "wal, jest figger that down on yer slate that you've hung thar; an' I'll bet a three-ounce nugget ag'in a kiss frum yer honey-trap, thet I kin plum the bull's-eye more times out of forty than you can."

"Done!" cried Noisy Nell, instantly. "If you win, you shall have the kiss; if I win, I'll take the nugget. Here, give your stakes to this young man," and she pointed to the younger of the two strangers, who had now drawn near.

"Git out!" cried Buckskin, in contempt; "d'ye s'pose I'd trust that rooster? Not much! Hold my own nugget."

"Then you won't shoot with me," replied Nell, coolly. "I wouldn't trust you two feet away. Gentlemen, is there any of you who wishes to try a string?"

"Wal, gal, dunno as it would be any harm ter try," said the elder of the strangers, stepping up and examining the target-rifle. "My name is Old Avalanche, miss, an' my old eyes can't crawl along a rifle barrel as they once could. Ef thet target thar war an Injun, I fancy I ked put a current o' electricity thru him wuss'n a streak o' wicked lightning. Tell ye w'at I did do, once. Ther great Annihilation—that is me, Old Avalanche, my goat Florence Night-in-a-gale, an' ole Prudence Cordellier, my mare—war up in Montana, huntin' Injuns, an' sellin' their scalp for door-mats."

"One day we run forminst about sixteen thousand o' the pesky varmints, out on ther prary, an' they maneuvered around till they got on ther right an' left side o' me, an' fetched up in ther rear, leavin' a natural lane ter scoot thru—a gantlet ter run, w' guns coverin' me w' deadly aim. But thes old devastatin' eppidemic pegged nary an inch, not for Hanner! I jest raised old Punch-em-Judy, my gun, an' let drive a bullet down ther lane, like refined lightning, an' actooally, sir, ther suction or draft o' thet bullet war so tremendous, thet et jerked every cussed Injun for a'd on his face, an' broke his neck!"

A roar of laughter went up from the crowd, in which Noisy Nell joined, heartily.

"Thet war no more'n a musketeer on ther back uv an elephant ter w'at I hev seen done, tho'," remarked the Annihilator, dryly. "Yes, gal, don't mind tryin' ter fetch thet bell, yonder, tho' ther old man ain't so young as he used ter be. This is my pard, Dead—I mean, Nedward Harris. He's sum on ther shute. Yes, don't care 'f I do."

And the next moment the rifle was at the old man's shoulder, there was a flash, a report, and an answering ring from the target.

"Thar. That's one fer me," commented the old man. "Load up, gal."

Noisy Nell obeyed with alacrity, and again the old man sighted and shot.

Twenty times in succession he fired, and every time the bell rung.

"Good shootin', sir," said Noisy Nell, as the Annihilator set down the gun. "I've seen crack shots that couldn't beat it."

"Oh! wait 'til ye see my boyee, heer, shute," was the grim response. "Heer, Nedward, try yer fist."

"Not with the rifle, Alva," replied Ned Harris, shaking his head. "There's no fun in that for me. Give me about four of those six-shooters you carry."

"Heer they are, then, but I'm afeared you're countin' too much. Thet target are deceivin', ef my old optics ain't in fault."

"Oh! that's all right," laughed Harris, coolly. "Perhaps there is some enterprising individual present who wants to bet that I cannot put twenty-four bullets in one mark upon the bull's-eye."

Then the handsome ex-road-prince looked calmly around him, scanning the sea of gr'n faces.

It was a bold challenge, with a fair chance for winning, and still no one seemed eager to wager money on it.

"Guess there isn't much money in the crowd, or else not much sand, Mr. Harris," said Noisy Nell. "A fair chance, gentlemen, and success for you almost certain."

This appeal brought forth a tall, lank, gray-bearded man, with sallow complexion and sunken, wild eyes, and a murmur of "Red Brand!" ran through the crowd, as he pushed his way through.

"Who is it?" Deadwood Dick asked of the fair game-keeper, as he beheld the man's approach.

"No one knows, except that he is called Red Brand, and owns the best claim in the gulch. Is supposed to have heaps of money. His claim is the Big Bonanza," replied Nell.

"Ah! then we will see. Bet, sir, that I cannot do w'at I offered!"

"Yes, I will bet," replied Red Brand, coolly, stroking his flowing beard. "My Big Bonanza mine against your life, that you cannot put twenty-four successive bullets on the bull's-eye, in one spot. No living man has done it, or can do it, I am sure."

"I can put as many against the bull's-eye, on the same spot. No catches!"

"No catches, sir."

"Very well, then. Gentlemen, you all witness this wager, I believe. I am to put twenty-four successive bullets against that bull's-eye, in the same spot, and win the Big Bonanza mine; or, I am to fail, and lose my life."

"Ay! ay!" responded the crowd.

Deadwood Dick turned to Red Brand.

"Your name, sir—"

"Is Red Brand!"

"And mine is Deadwood Dick, the ex-road-agent of the Black Hills, at your service!"

A cry of astonishment rung through the room, as if the name of the notorious young outlaw were well known in Eureka.

"You Deadwood Dick!" exclaimed Nell, in surprise.

"Yes, one and all, I am Deadwood Dick, but no longer a road-agent. I have come here to Eureka, to lead an honest existence, and be a citizen among you. If you let me alone, I'll let you alone. If you encroach upon my cornfield, I'll encroach upon yours. If you strike me, I'll strike back, and you probably have heard of the reputation I bear in that respect. We can be good friends, or bitter enemies, just whichever you please. Now, then, if you'll watch you'll see me fairly win this mine you call the Big Bonanza."

"It will be yer death ef you do!" growled Cal Buckskin.

"Oh! will it? What have you got to say about it?" Dick demanded.

"None of yer bizness, you galoot! But mind w'at I tole ye."

"Miss, you will please repaint that bull's-eye freshly, so we can tell just where the pellets strike," Dick said, paying no further attention to the ruffian.

Nell quickly obeyed, after which the handsome ex-road-agent took his position, one revolver in each hand, Old Avalanche holding the other two. Then up came the right hand, and, instantaneously, apparently without taking aim, he fired. Then his right dropped, and a shot from his left rung the bell. His right then followed, then his left, and thus in alternation, until the whole of the twenty-four shots had been dispatched upon their unerring mission.

Noisy Nell and Red Brand hurried forward to examine the target. They found only one visible spot where a bullet had struck, and that was precisely in the center of the bull's-eye. Yet every shot had distinctly rung the bell!

Deadwood Dick had won the Bonanza!

CHAPTER II.

A HAUNTING FORM—THE FIRST BLOW.

LOUD cries of astonishment ran through the Man-Trap, as Nell made known the wonderful fact that Deadwood Dick had put each of the twenty-four bullets upon one spot on the bull's-eye. No such shooting as this had the citizens of Eureka ever seen, and the keenest excitement followed.

All had heard of Deadwood Dick, and his reckless deeds of daring, but none of them could have believed that he was such an expert with fire-arms.

"Hurra! Great bone that domesticated old Joner!" yelled Old Avalanche, excitedly, while Florence bleated his approval. "Moses in the bull-rushes! thet war ther beautifullest o' ther beautiful! Why, ther singin' o' them aire purgatory pellets 'd be condooctive ter a fit of nonheerativness ef ye don't wear cotton in yer ears. Dicky, my night-bloomin' serious, ther Big Bonanza is urn, by fair shake."

"And we shall take it," said Deadwood Dick, coolly. "Ef Mr. Red Brand; did I not win it on the square, and isn't it mine?"

"Yes, you won it by the skin of your teeth, and it is yours," was the sullen reply. "But beware! A curse is on the place, and you may inherit it."

"I fear not for curses, sir. I have been cursed all my life, but have weathered the storm, and can do so again. Curses affect me about the same as bullets."

Then Dick and Avalanche turned away, and sauntered about, watching the scenes transpiring about them, and observing the many strange faces. Some of them the great Annihilator was able to recognize, while others were not within his memory.

There were girl waiters connected with the Man-Trap institution, some of whom were remarkably pretty, while others were quite the contrary.

Deadwood Dick was not a little surprised when one of these creatures, a gay, fascinating little butterfly, tapped him on the arm, and then pulled him aside.

"You are Deadwood Dick?" she said, more positive in tone than interrogative. "You come from the Black Hills."

"Yes, ma'am!" Dick responded, respectfully. He hardly knew what to make of it. "Is there any way I can serve you?"

"I believe so; and I can serve you also. You had in your band a man named Carlos Cambre?"

"Ha! yes; how did you know that?"

"Oh! I found out. Cambre is my runaway husband!"

"Phew!" this was a discovery for Dick; "your husband, eh? I did not know that he was married."

"He married me in Virginia City, and then deserted me."

"Very likely. He is a rascal at heart, and I have a bullet laid aside to use on him for an injury he did me."

"And it is of him I came to warn you. He is in this very town, searching for you. He may be in disguise and will strike you at first opportunity. So keep your eyes about you. He has some desperate game afoot."

"What nature?"

"I do not know. All the information I can get I will give you from time to time. Beware of him, lest he give you a miss-deal."

Then she turned away, leaving the ex-road-agent in a state of perplexity.

Later in the evening he went back where Noisy Nell was busy at doing nothing in her business, the customers having adjourned to lubricate. Somehow Dick felt that she was his friend—at least she was a

girl, and since parting with Leone, he hourly yearned for female companionship, when remembrances came back of the happy days he had spent. But, now, alas! those days had dissolved into nothingness, and he was an outcast on the world, while Leone—ah! he knew not whether she were living or dead.

"I must hunt up this Cambre," he muttered, a scowl upon his face, as he approached the shooting-stand. "He will know of Leone. As a lawyer, disguised of course, I can pump him dry. But I must make inquiries about this Red Brand!"

Nell smiled pleasantly as she saw the road-agent come up. She admired his cool, fearless ways, and his handsome face and figure, more than a little.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Harris. Have you come back to renew your attempts at the target?" she asked.

"Oh! no, Miss—"

"Brandon, if you please."

"No, I have not returned to give the ites of Eureka any more of my marksmanship. I think they have had a fair illustration that I can get there, with an odd little laugh, characteristic of him. But I wish to question you a little in regard to this chap from whom I won the Bonanza mine. Is he a dangerous sort of an individual?"

"Rather a hard customer, I am afraid, sir. Up at Florence City, last summer, he got some hard names, having been proven guilty of several ugly crimes."

"Ah! then I may be on the look-out for him, and not expect him to give up the mine without a struggle?"

"Right, sir; for every grain of gold you get out of the Bonanza mine, you may expect to fight a battle!"

"Very encouraging prospect, but I'll weather this point, yet. Good-evening to you. If you hear any news for me, just let me know, and if you ever need a strong right arm to protect you, just call upon Deadwood Dick."

Then the outlaw went back to where he had left Avalanche.

"Come, pard, is it not time to seek repose?" he asked, tapping the old man on the shoulder. "Remember that on the morrow we are to take possession—that is, you are, and your pard Little Alf. I will remain clear of the incumbence. But it shall be called Deadwood Dick's Bonanza, however, if you like. Come!"

"No, don't git in er perspiration, boyee," the Annihilator replied, grimly. "Thar's no hurry. It ain't daylight til et's mornin' so don't sweat yerself inter an apoplectic fit. Seen a feller up in Greenland, once, who war engaged at cuttin' ice fer ther Knickerbocker company, and ther scaldin' perspiration substance from his pores poured out on the ice, melted it all up an' drowned the poor Greenlander, besides deprivin' ther K. company o' that year's crop of ice—fad, by gracious. As I sed before, don't git in a sweat, boyee. I'm hangin' around fer fun, an' thar's goin' ter be swads'n swads, bymeby, you listen to yer legal adviser."

"Ha! Here comes the Eastern stage, now!" cried Dick, as the crowd surged toward the door at the rumble of approaching wheels. "Come, let's go out and see who comes?"

All Eureka turned out at stage time; consequently the gulch was well lined with humanity, when with the plunging and snorting of the fractious horses, and the cracking of Jehu's whip, the rickety old stage rolled up before the door of the Man-Trap, and came to a halt, 'mid the cheers of the multitude.

Old Avalanche and Deadwood Dick were among the crowd, and watched with idle curiosity the newcomers who left the stage, which was well loaded down. There were rough miners, and polished individuals who might have safely been classed with the gambling fraternity; men well-to-do, evidently here for speculative purposes; a half a dozen women of different stations in life, most of them deeply veiled.

But when Deadwood Dick's gaze became centered upon one of these—a little, cloaked figure, deeply veiled, and evidently frightened among such a crowd, he uttered a little cry, and clutched the Annihilator's arm, excitedly.

"Look, Avalanche! My God, can the dead return to life?" he gasped, pointing to the little figure. "It is she—Edith Stone, who you told me was dead—had drowned herself."

"Pooh! boyee, ye've got the spinal meningitis in yer eyes. Lord! ham-bone that was ther last sickness uv old Joner! thet's no more her than you be, you listen ter yer legal adviser."

"It is she! You cannot fool me. I know her figure too well. And that veil is but a flimsy disguise. It is Edith Stone, or her spirit."

He made a step forward as if to follow her, but the Annihilator held him back with a strong gripe.

"Hold yer hosses; no sweatin' ag'in. I once knew a feller thet got drowned in his own puddle of sweat. Thet gal ain't no Edith Stone, an' I'll bet my fine-tooth comb an' et's population on it. But in case it is her, you do not want to see her. Reckless, young feller, thet thar's one little red-haired critter thet's deservin' o' yer luv, an' baste me frum North Pole ter South with aged and decrepit eggs, ef ye're a goin' ter luv emny other gal but her! So put thet in yer pipe an' chew it. Jest you ante back inter yonder lubricatin' establishment, an' I'll interdoose myself ter ther girl. Horn of ther bull thet gored Moses in ther rushes! I'll soon analyze her, I'm tellin' you!"

Deadwood Dick turned rather reluctantly back into the saloon, a strange expression upon his face.

"The girl has followed me," he muttered, biting at the white nails of his still whiter fingers, thoughtfully. "I know it is she, no matter what report

Avalanche may bring back. He cannot deceive me. And she has come after me, alone. What are her feelings, I wonder—love or hate? I hope the latter; I can fight it best!"

He sauntered along, watching those about him, sharply, for now he might look for a disguised enemy in Carlos Cambre. What could the disloyal lieutenant want of him?

"Ha! by heaven! the blow has fallen at last!" he suddenly exclaimed under his breath, as he beheld a man tacking up a large poster against the wall.

"Again, Edward Harris, are you an outlaw by the decree of the law! They have pursued you, but you will not flee again. Steel to steel, face to face with his foes, Deadwood Dick will fight till the breath leaves his body. Once it was a fight for reputation—now it shall be a fight for life or death!"

There was a gleam in his eyes that boded no good to those who would strike at him—a grim set expression of his features which, rightly interpreted, meant defiance to the death!

What he saw to arouse his old bitterness of spirit, was the sheriff of Eureka posting a notice of reward upon the wall in a conspicuous place; one of those heralds that had hounded him—stared at him from every hand for the last three years, like haunting phantoms.

And, in large letters, the poster read, as follows—in words that went straight home to Harris's heart, like coals of fire:

"\$500 REWARD! By that power vested in me by virtue of law, and whereas the Territorial Government of Dakota has repeatedly found guilty of high-handed murder and outlawry the person herein-named, I offer the above reward for the capture and delivery at Yankton, Dakota, of 'Deadwood Dick,' or Edward Harris, the road-agent, whose former operations were confined to the Black Hills, but who is now supposed to be in some of the Territories. Affixed hereto, by me, JOHN L. PENNINGTON, on this the 12th day of October, 187—, the great gubernatorial seal of the Territory of Dakota."

Such was the notice Sheriff Jake McComber posted up for public inspection by the Eurekaites, and it was read and re-read, amid much excitement, by all who were congregated in the saloon.

"Deadwood Dick! Deadwood Dick!" passed from every mouth.

"Deadwood Dick!" shouted the man Buckskin. "That very chap was in hayr ter-night, gentlemen—the very same galoot. He put twenty-four bullets out o' twenty-four on ther bull's-eye, a-fukin'—"

"And Deadwood Dick is here, now!" cried the young road-agent, advancing fearlessly among the crowd.

"You heard me say to-night, pilgrims, that Deadwood Dick was no longer an outlaw unless forced to be one. Here I am. Leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone. Come and knock off my hat, and I'll knock off yours; then it will be war to the last—muzzle to muzzle and knife to knife!"

Not a man moved for a few moments—scarcely a breath was drawn.

Deadwood Dick stood confronting the crowd, his face grim, handsome, expressionless, his form erect, a pair of shining revolvers upon full level in his hands. All knew that he would not hesitate to commence the game of death, if pressed; he was desperate and reckless; as it were, their lives were in his hands. Yet Sheriff McComber did not hesitate to do his duty. He stepped forward, a look of resolution on his sunbrowned face.

"I'll not knock your hat off, young man," he replied, slowly, "for that is a prize-fighter's hold. But I must do my duty and arrest you, in the name of the law. You'll see the advisability of yielding without resistance, for they're all with me, here," with a nod at the crowd.

"That's the whole family is it, eh?" retorted Dick, a faint smile playing sarcastically about his lips.

"Well, they're a fine lot. Better adopt a few more, however, before attempting to arrest me. I give you fair warning to let me alone. If you don't heed it, abide the consequences!"

"Come on, boys! we'll take the braggart, or we'll die a-tryin'. One, two, three, and at him!"

The sheriff was a reckless fellow, whose previous good luck had made him vain, or else he would never have made the move, for the first leap he made forward was a leap of death, a bullet from one of Deadwood Dick's revolvers plowing a passage through his heart. And that checked what might have been a bloody affray.

The death of the sheriff seemed for the moment to inspire the remaining Eurekaites with a terrible dread, and they shrunk back, their hands clenching their weapons, their breath bated, a lack of resolution holding them powerless to move.

And, comprehending the situation, Deadwood Dick slowly backed his way out of the saloon, his revolvers still covering the crowd.

But the moment he issued out into the gulch, he saw them spring forward triumphantly, and knew they counted upon an easy victory.

CHAPTER III.

AVALANCHE ENCOUNTERS A PHANTOM.

DEADWOOD DICK escaped by making a dash through the crowd, that still swarmed out in the gulch, and worked his way along by degrees until he was half a mile up the lone gorge, with the mighty walls of mountain rock rising above him. And with his disappearance from Eureka, there disappeared a friend on whom Old Avalanche lavished his affection, for on his return from an interview with her whom Dick had declared to be Edith Stone, who was the cause of the parting of Dick and Leone, he found great excitement rife, and then learned of the death of the sheriff, and the young road-agent's daring escape.

"Bully fer ther boyce. I'd do the same of they

kicked me on ther shins. Great ham-bone! ef they'd let him alone he'd been peaceable enough, but now that they've rilled his angry speerits, look out fer a comet ter 'splode. Wonder where he'll go to!"

And this the great Annihilator was left to wonder, during the next four or five days, during which time he made determined search, but could find no trace of Deadwood Dick. He had either left the diggings, for safety or else was so securely hidden in the mountain fastnesses as to render his immediate discovery impossible. After the fourth day of search, the old man came to the conclusion that further effort was useless; then came the remembrance of Dick's right to the Big Bonanza mine.

"I will take possession uv et, an' hold et fer ther boyce," he muttered, and immediately fulfilled his promise by selecting a dozen miners from the crowds of idlers who thronged Eureka, and riding to the mine, which was two miles and a half above the golden town. There was simply a straight tunnel sunk into the mountain side, and an easy place to defend, once right of possession was obtained.

Red Brand sat in the mouth of the tunnel, smoking away at his pipe, as the horsemen rode up, the Annihilator in the lead. He was a strange being, unreadable and mysterious, and no one seemed to understand him.

"Hello! great ham-bone that kerfummixed old Joner!" cried Avalanche, in his jocular way. "Heer's our man, now, me lads! Hello! Howdy do, Mr. Red Brand! How's ther pulsating state of yer physiological persession?"

"I am well," was the reply, as the miner rose to his feet. "What brings you here, sir?"

"What? Wall, I don't reckon et's hard ter answer sech a question as that," said Old Avalanche. "I am heer, w' my backers, ter take persession o' ther 'Big Bonanza,' w'at Deadwood Dick won at shutin'. I am called Old Avalanche, ther great Injun Annihilator, tho' ther achievement don't confine itself bully ter ther transmigration o' ther Injun race. This 'ere hoss is my left bower, Prudence Cordellar, an' thess 'ere beast on my right aire Florence Night-in-a-gale—both o' em workin' 'ints o' ther great Annihilator, ther awe-inspirin' devastatin' epydemic w'at sweeps like a dose o' castor ole fizzie thru these boreal latitudes and longy-toads. I am counsellor and legal adviser o' Dicky, an' I venture ter put in his claim fer him, during his absence."

"Your claim shall be recognized," said Red Brand, calmly, though the old scout detected a fiery gleam in his peculiar dark eyes. "Dismount and follow me, and I'll show ye what is to be yours."

"Yes, cum erlong, boyce, but pull yer pistols in readiness, fer we don't know what sort o' deeficulty we're a-goin' ter encounter. Great ham-bone that engulfed Joner! ef I was as mean as sum men is, I'd go an' sell my head fer a statler o' Washington, I would, true 's thar's soothin' influence in a 'jack-mule's' fut. Once know'd a man so mean that he sold his corpuss ter a fizzleman, an' then cheated ther poor cuss out o' his rocks by crematin' hisself in ther smoke-house—fact, by gracious. But thet's neither here nor thar, as ther hoosier sed when lookin' fer ther lively flea. An' thet same reminds me uv a feller ther got covered w' fleas, uv in Colarado. At fust he didn't know how ter utilize 'em, but finally raised an army o' fifteen thousan', an' went ter wagin' war ag'in' grasshoppers, an' thet same feller actually used to git paid by ther government fer hullsle slaughter."

The Annihilator then dismounted, and he and his gang followed Red Brand in through the tunnel, which was long and dark. It finally ended, however, but in a way unexpected to all except Red Brand; for once more they emerged into the open air and light of day, finding themselves in a deep, natural basin, hemmed in on every side by stupendous piles of mountain-rocks. A basin whose bottom was covered with a light, fine sand, through which ran a stream of clear, sparkling water, pouring down from the crags on one side, and sinking out of sight on the other through a huge crevice in the rocks. And this was Big Bonanza mine.

A strongly-built cabin stood at one side of the basin, surrounded by little rows of spruce pines, and looking desolate and uncanny in its solitude.

"Here we are, pilgrims," Red Brand said, waving his hand around him, with a strange smile. "This is Bonanza basin and the place of the accursed. You see yonder cabin. That is the abode of the spirit of Andrew Denham—the Phantom Miner—who is the terror of this region. There is a little legend connected with this mine, which you should know. It was discovered first by Andrew Denham, four years ago. He is the only one who ever took away an ounce of gold from here, even though these sands are rich with the stuff. He remained here a year, and panned out an immense fortune; then, one day, he was found dead in front of yonder cabin. Since then the mine has had ten different owners, but never has an ounce of gold been taken away at one time. A phantom was said to guard the place, and each gang of miners has been frightened away. I bought the mine, and I have seen the elephant. You are welcome to the place, if you are willing to fight inferno and all its legions. I am not!"

Saying which the man turned upon his heel, and strode back through the tunnel toward the gulch.

For a few moments after his departure, neither the Annihilator nor his men spoke a word—stood and stared at each other, each evidently waiting for the other to break the silence. At last Old Avalanche made the break.

"Great ham-bone that wrecked ther constioochin uv Joner!" he ejaculated, shaking himself by way of preparing for action. "So thess aire an abode uv hog-goblins, an' ghastly perambulators, eh? A

sort o' hot-house fer cultyvat'n' speerits; but ef thet cuss calkylated he war goin' ter skeer yer 'unlike sarvent, he aire barkin' at ther wrong coon. G'oss! phantoms! hog-goblins! hurra!"

And the eccentric Annihilator executed a jig in the auriferous sand.

"Red Brand didn't lie nary a bit," said Hi Sampson, one of the miners. "Thar is a Phantom Miner, an' I've see'd him ride straight thru 'Reka, like split-an' we all blazin' away at him w' our revolvers ter no purpose. Ye might as well try ter tumble an earthquake."

"Oh! I don't doubt your word—ham-bone and Joner, no!" replied Avalanche. "but when ye make this great devastatin' epydemic believe in hog-goblins an' sech, jest expect old Gabriel ter play his trump-et card, thet's all."

"And are ye goin' ter stay heer?" asked one.

"Sartain, I aire. Ef ye don't want any o' thes a'riforous layin' around loose, here, jest scoot fer Eureka, as fast as you can. I'm goin' ter stay!"

"Then we're with you, old man. My name is Keno Bill, and I ain't no coward, ef ther court knows herself. We'll stay, an' we'll hold ther fort!"

And they did stay. Camp was pitched on the bank of the stream, mining implements, provisions and ammunition brought from Eureka; sluice-boxes sunk, and mining begun in earnest at Deadwood Dick's Bonanza.

Another week passed by, and no molestation was offered the miners, whose number Avalanche had increased to thirty, and the rich sand of the basin-bottom was panning out immensely.

Curious miners and loafers swarmed in from Eureka, to watch proceedings, every day, much to the annoyance of the Annihilator, who did not desire to be disturbed; speculators also came and made handsome offers for claims in the rich basin, all of which were refused by Avalanche.

"I hain't got no say onter thes 'ere mine, gentlemen," he would say, shaking his head in a way that was at once decisive and resolute. "Et b'longs ter Deadwood Dick, an' I'm merely keepin' things a-movin' fer him, ye see."

And when questioned about the whereabouts of the young road-agent, Avalanche would again shake his head, dubiously, saying:

"Dunno nothin' about ther boyce, gentlemen. He cum hyar all along w' ther great Annihilation; but he skipped out, an' that's the last I've see'd o' him. Expect he'll come back? Waal, thet's hard to tell, as Gesler sed when he tuk aim at ther apple on top o' William's pericranium. He may cum down on us in a way thet we'll not fit our fices. Ye've distarbed ther seethin' caldron o' anger an' got et bubblin', an' like's not et'll scald ye. Great historical ham-bone! ye dunno nothin' about ther deadly power o' my Dickey, pilgrims! See'd him paralyze a poor cuss over in Deadwood once, by jest winkin' his eye—fact, by gracious! An' he's a dose o' fizzie ter them as he don't like."

And so the days passed by—the soft, hazy autumnal days, and at the Bonanza everything ran along in an even tenor. The miners worked industriously, and were well rewarded, for the yellow sands were rich with flakes of gold, in some cases panning out a quarter of an ounce to the panful.

As yet none of the gold had been taken out of the basin, the miners preferring to keep it in their own possession rather than trust it in the keeping of the Eureka bank, whose officers were rather distrusted by the people.

But at last, one night, Avalanche having a considerable bulk of the precious stuff, resolved to go into town for the purpose of exchanging it for greenbacks.

He left the camp well armed, and mounted upon the back of Prudence Cordellia, no thought of danger entering his mind. But when he rode into the tunnel, where all was intensely dark, his thoughts went back to Red Brand and the story of the Phantom Miner, and an unexplicable feeling of dread attacked him. He was not a coward; neither was he of a superstitious turn, yet he had no power to control the strange sensation that crept over him, now. His imagination conjured up exaggerated pictures; a clammy sweat unconsciously broke out upon his face and body; he was nervous, and grasped the reins with one unsteady hand, while the other rested upon the hilt of a revolver in his belt.

"G'lang, Prudence, ye durned beast; what is the matter w' you?" he growled, using his heels in the place of spurs to urge the sorry animal along.

"Drat the luck. I feel 's spookish as a yearling colt in fly time. G'lang, Prudence—Thunder! hello!"

The latter two exclamations were caused by the sudden bolting and rearing of the mare, accompanied by terrified snorts.

"Be still, you ornery beast! Heavens! ham-bone that gargled Joner! I see w'at the matter is. Hog-goblins, as I'm a great disease o' devastation!"

And what the Annihilator discovered did look decidedly suspicious—ghost-like and uncanny, in the dense gloom of the tunnel. It was a tall, white-robed figure, around which hung a halo of bluish light, moving slowly but surely along toward him, one hand and arm upraised, the fore-finger of the hand, the end gleaming like a human eye, pointing accusingly at the old scout. It was such a spectacle as might make even a fearless man like Avalanche quail, and there came rather a whitish expression about his lips, though he sat motionless in the saddle, a cocked revolver in his clutch, and a stern expression on his face.

"Ghosts, eh?" he soliloquized, grimly—"hog-goblins an' evaporatin' speerits, eh? Waal, we'll investigate this matter right forinst the spot, as the Irishman sed when he went fer ter find ther motive—"

power in a mule's fut. We'll ask Mr. Hog-goblin 'wat he wants, an' ef he remains mum, we'll try cold lead as a restorative fer lost speech."

Nearer came the white-robed figure, apparently floating along on the current of air, that drew through the tunnel. And the nearer it came, the more uneasy grew Prudence. At last it came to a pause, not ten yards away, and now the Annihilator made the discovery that beneath those cloud-like white robes was the shape of a human skeleton!

And to his further horror he could hear the harsh rattle of the bones, and a faint wheezy unnatural laugh, sounding far more ghostly than human. Still was the arm of the specter upraised, and the strange fore-finger, the end of which glowed like a human eye, pointed straight at Old Avalanche, who for the space of a minute was unable to command his powers of speech. But at last he threw off the spell, by a determined effort, and brought his revolver to bear upon the phantom.

"Hello, thar—wie gahs, as ther Dutchman said. What do you want?" he cried.

There was no answer, except a horrible rattling of the bones, and a declination of the fore-finger of several degrees, until it aimed at the Annihilator's belt, to which three leathern pouches of gold were attached.

"Oh! ye want thar a'riferous do ye? Yew want thes devastatin' disease ter give ye a few flakes o' fortune, do ye? Waal, her they aye then;" and raising his weapon on a level with the specter's heart, or where such an organ ought to be, he fired—once! twice! thrice! the roar of each report echoing weirdly through the tunnel. But the only result was another rattling of the bones, and that same faint, ghostly laugh—unlike anything the old scout had ever heard.

His hair now fairly rose up on end! What was the meaning of this? Had he indeed tackled something invulnerable—bullet proof—a phantom, not of the living but of the dead? An awful horror, such as he had never before experienced, stole over him, and he gazed at the ghostly vision in a sort of fascination, irresistible and intoxicating. The more so, when his gaze was riveted upon a pair of little black eyes, which gleamed from an opening in the phantom dress—a pair of eyes so magnetic that he felt their overpowering influence—felt that he was powerless to move a limb or muscle; it was a strange, awful spell, in which, though living, he seemed as one of the dead.

He was conscious of all—conscious that the terrible thing came closer—conscious that his waist was lightened of its load, even though he could feel no touch betraying the agency of human hands—conscious that the phantom swept past him and vanished, and that he was left alone there in Stygian darkness, powerless to move or speak.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GRAYFORDS.—LIEUTENANT CAMBRE.

OUTSIDE of the mouth of Eureka gulch, about a mile beyond where the mining element had pitched its town, was a palatial country residence, such as perhaps could be found in no other part of the wild silver land of Idaho. The property embraced several thousand acres of the immediate billowy prairie, which was well watered and used for grazing purposes, and the buildings and spacious grounds, which were known as "The Oaks," probably on account of a complete hedge-work of these trees which the hand of man had planted around the mansion.

The lawn, sloping either way from the dwelling, was well laid, and dotted here and there with flowering shrubs and beds of blossoming plants, and marked by serpentine walks and carriage drives. Here were shaded bowers, where swings, croquet grounds and the like, and everywhere evidence of wealth, and an eye for beauty, which had not found training in the wild West.

The mansion was built of stone, which had been quarried from the neighboring mountains, and was imposing in appearance externally, while the interior was richly furnished, with a critical taste displayed in the arrangement of everything.

Here resided the Grayfords, one of the richest and most aristocratic, as well as influential families in the territory. They counted their money by the tens of thousands, and the senior Grayford owned some of the largest silver lodes in Idaho. He was an inveterate miser, and had few friends among the poor, toward whom he was harsh and haughty. He hoarded his money closely, and not trusting to the honesty of banks, kept it in a large safe in his mansion.

Repeatedly had attempts been made by outlaws to burglarize the Oaks, but Fordyce Grayford kept a guard over his strong room, and a half-dozen faithful male servants; consequently each attempt had been unsuccessful on the part of the burglars.

Of the family there were four, consisting of Fordyce Grayford and his wife; a grown-up son named Guy, and a daughter of eighteen, named Claudine.

Of his children old Fordyce Grayford had no cause to be proud.

Guy was a reckless, worthless reprobate—a gambler, a spendthrift, and, it had been hinted, an outlaw. Of this, however, there had never been any proof, further than that he had been seen in conversation with several notorious characters.

Claudine was haughty, uncivil and bad in temper; treacherous and deceitful, and though rather handsome, as the word goes, she had few admirers. Worst of all, she was a thief. On more than one occasion she had depleted the purse of her old father of a thousand or so, generally in co-operation with her brother.

The elder Grayford was a man of some five-and-fifty years at the time of our story. He derived an immense income both from his mining investments

and extensive cattle herds, but this not satisfying his greed for riches, he ventured into speculation in and about Eureka, almost always successful, in spite of the fact that sharpers constantly laid traps for him.

On the day preceding the night of the Annihilator's encounter with the Phantom Miner, Captain Grayford, as he was called, brought home a new visitor to the Oaks—a distinguished army officer, he explained to his household, who must be treated with the greatest respect and consideration.

The individual in question was a tall, well-formed fellow of twenty-five, with a dark Spanish face, that possessed a few handsome points, dark eyes and hair, and a mustache and imperial to match. In dress he was faultless and elegant.

Lieutenant Cambre, he was called, and claimed to be of the United States Army, which of course was a lie, as the reader will readily recognize him as Cambre of Deadwood Dick's once notorious band.

What Cambre's business was at the Oaks was quite apparent by listening to the conversation between him and Grayford, as they were closeted in the speculator's office, an hour or so after dinner.

"You perceive," Cambre was saying, "that the scheme is simply immense. It cannot fail, and the investment of a few hundred thousand will pay twenty-five or thirty per cent. the first year, and after that increase with age. Why, my dear sir, six years ago I sunk five out of six hundred thousand dollars in a gigantic railroad project, but that was because of inexperience. Since then I have doubly retrieved myself, and by this last move I propose to raise myself to independence for life. It is a sure thing, and one's capital invested, is bound to pay a handsome revenue."

Old Captain Grayford gazed at the coolly-scheming villain opposite him, with a strange gleam in his little gray eyes. He was a keen student of human nature; experience had taught him the secret of picking out a villain almost at sight.

"See here," he said, bringing his hand heavily down upon his knee, "do you know that I know you to be an unmitigated rascal and a liar? You are smart and crafty above the average, but not sufficiently so to fool an old miser like me, who has had dealing with men of just your type throughout a prosperous and eventful life. There is no such project in contemplation as the one you name, and, even if I were to invest capital in such a 'spec,' I should do it myself, not trusting even my own son or daughter, both of whom are a disgrace to the name of Grayford."

Cambre uttered a fierce curse. To be baffled from the beginning was maddening, but he was not to be cheated of his prey, even at this rebuff.

"And you dare to insinuate—" he began.

"I dare to insinuate nothing, sir, but to your face I dare tell you openly that you're a scoundrel and a liar. To be sure, you at first rather gulled me, but after you began to preach on that railroad scheme—that was enough. You are no longer a welcome visitor in my house, sir."

"Oh! well, then we'll call me an unwelcome one for the present. I have you completely in my power, Fordyce Grayford, and I mean to make the most of my situation."

"Completely in your power?" repeated the speculator, in undisguised amazement. "I should like to know how!"

"You would? Well, it will require but a few moments to give you an idea of what I am driving at. You are not one of the dull kind, and will easily comprehend, I believe. I did not propose to enter upon this matter yet, but may as well, to let you know on how little a thread a life may hang. In the first place, I enter a charge against you which the law, except in Utah, pronounces a misdemeanor. Fordyce Grayford, you are a bigamist. You have married and become the father of children by this second wife, while you have a first wife living!"

Ha! has a thunderbolt fallen! The mine-owner leaps to his feet, with a ghastly white face, his form trembling as in an ague-fit—his eyes blazing luridly.

"You say this?" he cried, his breath coming and going in quick gasps. "Then you lie!—lie like the devil!"

"Oh! no, I do not lie," Cambre replied, nonchalantly. "I'm always sure of my point before I show my hand, as the saying goes. I can produce that first wife inside of twenty-four hours, and her heir to all your wealth, in as many more. Aha! I have got it all worked out fine, old man, and you are in my power!"

"Yes, in your power," muttered the old mine-owner, dropping back into his chair; "heavily in your power. But still I defy you. You can do nothing. It is twenty years since all that; time has outlawed the case. She refused to live with me then or to let me have the child. Therefore I am legally divorced, and the result of that first union is not my heir."

"Ah! we'll see about that," Cambre said, rising, with a dark frown. "Perhaps you are right; then, again, perhaps you are wrong. I will seek legal counsel, and report at the first opportunity."

He left the mansion, and ordering his horse, a fine, spirited bay, he mounted, and galloped back toward Eureka.

But, while galloping along, busying his brain over his little scheme, there suddenly rose before him, out of a hollow in the billowy prairie, a figure on horseback—a familiar figure, the sight of whom caused him to leap up in his stirrups, with an oath.

Could this be?—was he really in the presence of the one he most dreaded, yet was most anxious to meet, the dauntless, daring road-prince, Deadwood Dick?

It required only one glance to satisfy him that it was indeed the notorious young outlaw, who dissolved his band and fled hither, where veins of silver run zig-zag through the earth.

Deadwood Dick as of yore, in his emblematical suit of jetty black, black hat, gloves, mask, saddle-trappings, and horse! A revolver was in the young road-agent's hand, else Cambre would have spurred away. But he knew Dick's marksmanship too well to run any risks, and therefore rode straight on until the noses of their horses touched.

"Halt!" came in the clear, pure tones of the outlaw; "you are mine, Carlos Cambre. Right here in my hand I hold a traitor's death—who deserves it more than you?"

The unfaithful Lieutenant grew white about the lips, and shifted uneasily in his saddle. Then a gentle flush stole over his countenance, like a flame of fire upon a prairie horizon—flashed and then died out, leaving a smoky-white appearance.

"I am in your power, true enough, captain," he replied, in a low tone. "You will never, never forgive me because I had you imprisoned by your wife's orders, I suppose. Perhaps I did wrong, and I would crave your forgiveness, only I know you are unforgiving. You have your revolver ready—shoot me, if it will cancel the debt; I am not afraid to die."

"No, you are not afraid to die," replied Deadwood Dick, with a low mocking laugh, "or else I should kill you, which I am not quite ready to do, yet. I would first use you for other purposes."

"Oh! so you wish to make me your tool, eh?" Cambre sneered, his eyes emitting tigerish sparkles; "I'd advise you not to trust me too far. Snakes sometimes bite snakes."

"Oh! yes, I am aware of that—especially when two venomous reptiles of your type collide. But you have your choice—death, or the execution of my wishes, whichever you will."

"What dirty job do you want done?"

"No dirty job, wretch! I want you to color your fingers in a little human blood, that is all!" with a reckless laugh.

Cambre shuddered, in spite of himself.

He was surprised to find such a change in Deadwood Dick. Was he turning ruffian, just because of the loss of a woman's love?

"Name your work. Dishonor and death have equal terrors—I know not which I shall choose!" he replied.

At which there was a contemptuous "humph!" from Deadwood Dick.

"You are mighty pious of late, I see," he went on, deepest sarcasm in his tones. "Wouldn't cut a man's breathing-pipe, sooner than you'd look at him, I dare say."

"I can proudly say that I have never been guilty of willful murder, yet, sir. Nor can any one truthfully accuse me of such a crime."

"I do not propose to. The case I wish you to execute is this: I have learned that Leone, your confederate and my wife, is here in Eureka. I came into possession of the knowledge by merest accident, but did not learn her whereabouts, for a certainty. She may be disguised or not, just as the case happens. Anyhow, she has a babe in her arms—the first child of our union. It does not rightfully belong to her, and she shall not have it! You must steal it and bring it to me. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly! But you spoke of blood. You surely do not wish me to murder?"

"Oh! no. I wish you to murder a certain individual named Deadwood Dick, the Road-agent Prince!"

"What! want me to murder you? Are you crazy, man?"

"Ha! ha! No, I do not want you to murder me, but Deadwood Dick No. 1. I am Deadwood Dick No. 2!"

"You are lying!" he said, decidedly. "You are the real Deadwood Dick, and I know it."

"Oh! you do, eh? Well, in case that what you say is true, who is No. 2 Deadwood Dick?"

"That I cannot tell. Nor can I tell your object in wanting such party killed. It need not matter to me, however. I will get the babe, at earliest opportunity."

"Very well; see that you do. My spies shall watch you even as you take each step. And if you try to play me false, remember the old sign of the Double Daggers!"

Then Deadwood Dick wheeled his horse and galloped back toward the mountains, taking a course that would lead him a good dozen miles beyond the mouth of Eureka gulch.

While Cambre rode slowly on toward the mining town, watching the easy graceful equestrianism of the road-agent, and wondering in his mind if it were really Deadwood Dick.

He said he was No. 2, but lied. There are few persons who ride like him. But who is this other party? There must be two Deadwood Dicks in the field. I want the original, but must contrive to meet him when this heirship business gets ripe, and I can drop him before he drops me. Two Deadwood Dicks! Phew! that promises to make such a little town as this Eureka, exceedingly lively."

And right here Cambre hit upon the truth. Things promised to be peculiarly interesting for the Eureka-ites, who had never known molestation from those bold fearless knights of the field called road-agents; for before night of that day all Eureka knew that Deadwood Dick was haunting the town—were told so by many a notice posted conspicuously about on trees and rocks:—

"As ye do by me, so will I do unto you!"

"DEADWOOD DICK."

People about town read these notices; curious miners paused on their way from work and stared at the threatening posters; speculators and mine-owners read them and indulged in fits of profanity seldom equalled, and a general feeling of excitement and indignation was rife in all circles.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI

Eureka was blessed with one hotel that was called "first-class," in the mines. It was a large, roomy structure, and bore the name of the "Flag of Truce."

its proprietor a late Confederate, and probably choosing the name as one appropriate to his sentiments.

Straight to this hotel, which was perhaps a quarter of a mile from the Man-Trap, went Carlos Cambre, a waiter showing him to a commonly-furnished room on the second floor.

The only occupant of this apartment was a woman of some five-and-forty years—a woman on whom time had left marks, for her features were wrinkled and pinched, and her hair threaded with gray. Her eyes, however, still retained their fire of youth—were rather sinister of expression, inasmuch as they could at times become fascinating in their glances.

Her attire was simple, yet neat, and upon her marriage finger a solitaire diamond ring was worn that in its day had cost a large sum, the pattern showing it to have been of ancient manufacture—probably a relic of past generations.

The woman looked up from some sewing at which she was engaged as Cambre entered, nodding mechanically to a chair opposite her.

"You are back, I see," she said, as if the effort to converse was painful. "I suppose you bring the same old story."

"No, Cathie," the ex-lieutenant replied, "I do not. I to-day called upon Fordyce Grayford, and broke the ice. But I fear that your claim won't pass muster. The old rascal claims that it is outlawed, it being twenty years since you left his bed and board."

"Ah! so he will defy me, eh?" and Cathie compressed her lips, tightly. "Well, we will see about it. He cannot dispute my son's right to the estate, even if I am outlawed. Please touch the bell on the table, there, Mr. Cambre!"

Cambre obeyed, and a moment later an elderly gentleman stepped into the room, hat and cane in hand, he evidently coming from an adjoining apartment.

"Ah! did you summon me, madame?" he asked, bowing low. "What service can I do you, pray?"

"I wish to ask you, Mr. Bolton, if I am really outlawed from claim upon the Grayford property—that is, really outlawed by time? As a lawyer, your opinion ought to be decisive on that subject."

"Ahem! yes. Well, my dear madame, I am inclined to the belief that your claim is indeed outlawed, on account of the great number of years that have passed since you left the shelter of your husband's roof."

"Oh! then are all my hopes and expectations to be crushed?" the woman moaned, burying her face in her hands and bursting into tears. "I believed, after I found that my truant husband was here, I could make him own me, or I and my boy could come in for the property after death."

"Oh! I wouldn't be discouraged yet, madame. Your son's claim will hold all the property, if you can but find him, unless the old gent has made a late will. I don't know how the case would be, then; I would have to go to Boise City to consult the Territorial statutes."

"That son will not be easy to find, I think," said Cambre, drumming upon the table. "Of course I know nothing about who he is, but I have a suspicion, derived from a word Cathie let drop when I first met her in Deadwood."

"Ah! so you have a suspicion, eh?" the woman said, gazing straight at him until he was forced to drop his gaze, a flush of guilt mounting his cheek. "I believe you are playing a double game, here, Carlos Cambre."

"Oh! you do, eh?" he replied, a meaning glitter in his eyes. "Well, think what you please. I don't crave your employment one iota. You proposed that I should tender my assistance on account of my knowledge of the country, believing I might be a handy tool. But a tool usually executes mechanism, and, in procuring copies of all your papers, I have provided myself for the hour when my services would be no longer needed!"

As he thus spoke, the face of the scheming villain was lit up by a smile of triumph, which exposed his gross, evil nature.

"What? What is this you say?" demanded the woman, Cathie, springing to her feet, excitedly, while Lawyer Bolton followed her example—"you possess copies of my papers, Carlos Cambre?"

"Exactly, madam! I saw a big game at stake, when I entered your service. I saw that I had the matter all in my own hands. I stole your papers and copied them!"

"Ah! but we have the originals still!" cried Bolton, gleefully, "and our testimony will overbalance yours—you being an ex-outlaw. Ha! ha! take courage, madam; we still bid fair to come in on the home-stretch."

"But ruled out of time," replied Cambre, with a sneering laugh. "Oh! it's all right, my friends—on my side. I think I can put my fingers on the right party, and make him heir, of course leaving you out in the cold, unless you will pay handsomely to be interested. I have my papers—the originals, also—"

"You lie!" cried Cathie, fiercely.

"Oh! no, I don't; look and be sure of your point before you show your hand!"

A look of horror overspreading her features, and with faltering footsteps, Cathie went to a desk, in one corner of the apartment, and unlocked a small drawer.

"Gone!" she gasped, reeling back, as if she had been struck a heavy blow.

"Gone?" echoed Bolton, the lawyer, springing forward to ascertain the truth of madame's statement.

"Gone!" assented Cambre, with a mocking laugh, "and I have got them—put away for safe keeping. My dear madam, and worthy limb of the law, allow me to bid you a pleasant good-night."

And he bowed himself out of the room, with a triumphant smile on his lips, leaving the two astonish-

ed victims of his villainy to their bitterest reflections, while he made his way down-stairs and out into the gulch street.

It must have been fully an hour, after the departure of the terrible Phantom Miner, that Old Avalanche spent in the mine tunnel, unable to move or speak, from the effect of the combined scare, defiance and robbery, before he felt a return of his stunned senses and the blood once more coursed through his veins. From some incomprehensible cause he had stiffened where he sat, but soon was able to move his hands and feet, after which by violent exercise of those limbs he found himself once more himself again.

Prudence occupied the same position she had before the spell, and was sleeping complacently with one eye open, while Florence Cordelia was browsing away at some brush she had dragged into the tunnel.

"Great ham-bone that afflicted old Joner," the old man gasped, when he found that his power of speech was returning. "Rushes thet bull-dozed old Moses! am I or am I not am I, as the lads say? An' whar am I? Be I ther dreaded devastator o' the peraries? Aire I ther great epydemic o' extermination—thet terrific Injun fizzle? Or aire I a phantom—a ghost—a hog-goblin' or discomboweled speerit, frum ther immortal shades uv Tinctarius?"

He peered around, expecting still to behold his phantom foe, but to his unbounded relief, only blank darkness hovered around.

"The dasted, critter's vamoused, sure's thar's fun in a jack-mule's hind foot. An', by thunderation! my gold's gone! Fact, by gracious! Here I've bin made a helpless old galoot by some infernal power, and teetotally skinned uv my a'riferous by a hog-goblin!"

The old scout was sorely puzzled for once in his venturesome life. He knew that he had passed through a very strange spell, and had been made a helpless victim—had been robbed of his gold. Then his mind reverted to the fact that he had discharged seven shots at the ghostly apparition, and what human mortal could stand up under such a fire, and every bullet sent unerringly! Ah! here was a mystery of mysteries!

Turning Prudence about, the Annihilator rode slowly back into Bonanza Basin, and down across the slope to where a camp-fire burned upon the edge of the creek. He was resolved to say nothing concerning his encounter with the Phantom, yet. He would let things work their own way, and keep a vigilant watch in the future, trusting to his own sagacity to unravel the mystery of the Phantom.

Fortunately, he had none of the others' gold but his own with him, and no one need know anything about his loss. Indeed, it would be death to the interests of the mine to alarm the superstitious miners, as they would no doubt instantly quit the claim.

He found most of them still lounging about the fire, smoking their pipes and telling yarns, Keno and Little Alf being without rivals when Avalanche was absent. But when he rode into camp on his sorry-looking specimen of a horse, followed by the ugly, sneakish-appearing billy-goat, a shout went up.

"Hurra! here's the great epydemic o' Injun fizzle!" cried Little Alf, with a hearty laugh. He had finished the latter part of his journey to Eureka in company with Deadwood Dick; later had entered Avalanche's employ in the mines. "Now, tumble off, Annihilator, and spin us an old tearin' yarn, for you're the boss on lyin', ef ever there was a boss. You 'n' old Whiffles orter been hitched together like the Siamese twins, Nick Whiffles was a good shot, by the way. I seen him scrape a rosy blush from a gal's cheek, onc't, quicker'n ye ked say Knickerbocker."

"Jess so," Avalanche observed, sitting sidewise on Prudence's back; "reminds me uv a time when ther great Annihilation war up in Nevada, scoutin' around. One night I hed a dream, an' I dreamt thet I war lookin' inter my darter's room, in ther Ebbitt House at Washington. I thort I see'd a big musketeer crawling upon ther fair face on ther piller; it made my blood bile ter see ther cuss lickin' his chops in contemplation uv a gory feast; I drew my revolver, an' tuk aim, bound thet et shed be blood fer blood; I pulled ther trigger, there was an orful report, accump'nied by terrific screams, an', gentlemen, I bein' in Nevada an' that gal in Washington, what d'ye suppose? w'at d'ye s'pect war the result?"

"You hit the musketeer, eh?" from Alf.

"No, he hit the gal!" declared Keno.

"No, I didn't, boyees. Great hambone! In my sleep I'd pulled a six-shooter, an' pinned Florence's tail, hayr, ter a cottonwood tree, jest as nice as ye please. Ther hole's thar yet, ef ye wish to make an examination."

"Pshaw! thet's nothin'," averred Keno, laying aside his pipe. "I once see'd a feller lay a field-glass on top o' his rifle, an' shoot clean from Galveston ter London and knock a fly off'n the nose o' Queen Victoria."

"I pass," cried Little Alf.

"I guess it remains fer me ter order 'em up, next time we go to 'Reka," added Avalanche, dismounting, with a grim smile, "tho', gentlemen, I hev beat even thet. I once sent a bullet across ther peraries after a man as owed me ten cents he'd borrowed fer a drink, an' ther bullet went so fast and attracted so much friction, thet et set ther bull prairie afire, an' ther fire heated ther bullet an' got it red-hot, an' ther rays frum it set fire ter thet feller's clothes, an' he was a cremated corpuess before he'd got anywhere's near ter ther bullet, or ther bullet hed got anywhere's nigh ter him, and—"

"Hold on! we pass," cried both Keno and Alf, deprecatingly.

The Annihilator unbridled Prudence, and let her free to graze, while he sat down upon a log, and lit his pipe.

"Avalanche," said Alf, exchanging glances with the others, "we've seen the Phantom Miner!"

"Eh? You see'd the Phantom Miner?"

"Yes, or what we supposed to be his ghostship—a white floating thing in mid-air, sailin' about as ef there was fun in scarin' folks out o' their wits."

"And by heaven! there comes the infernal thing again!" yelled Keno, springing to his feet.

He pointed directly overhead, where, sure enough, a ghostly apparition was slowly and gracefully floating through the air, surrounded by a mysterious halo of light!

It was far above them and only dimly visible against the inky-black heavens, with no motive power visible. Was it a spirit of the air? Could it be that Bonanza Basin was really haunted by supernatural beings?

The thought was horrifying!

But an exclamation from Avalanche warned the group of their danger. *The apparition, phantom, or whatever, was coming swiftly downward!*

CHAPTER VII.

A BLOW STRUCK IN FIRE—WHICH OF TWO.

The words that rung through the Man-Trap saloon were uttered by a strange horseman who had ridden boldly in through the open door, and with a cocked revolver covered the crowd of miners and ruffianly characters, who pressed forward against the bar upon which Red-Hot Harris stood so defiantly.

The words also caused Old Roxly to lower his aim upon Red-Hot, and wheel partly around, uttering a curse as he beheld the daring rider. Was he wrong? Was this black-clad, masked youth on the horse the genuine Deadwood Dick?

Ah! what doubt could there be of it?

It was the same outfit he had worn in Deadwood, or one a very exact counterpart of it; the same handsome figure, and graceful ease in the saddle.

But the two revolvers held in the leveled hands, caused the crowd to shrink back with a murmur of fear. Roxly stood for a moment in speechless dismay.

"Yes, I am Deadwood Dick!" repeated the same ringing voice—"the so-called road-agent, on whom the world lavishes such a wealth of pure, unfeigned affection," with a bitter, sarcastic laugh. "I tried to reform, but you would not let me. Your work be upon your own heads; this time it is fire—the next will be blood!"

Sternly came these words; then, at a single word, the powerful black horse wheeled and bounded from the saloon, bearing away its dare-devil rider into the gloom of the starless night.

"Ten thousand devils! Quick! after him; a thousand dollars for a horse!" yelled Old Roxly, springing after him in pursuit, with the excited *habitus* of the Man-Trap at his heels. "Stop him! A thousand dollars reward for Deadwood Dick! Shoot him! A horse! a horse!"

But Eureka did not possess many available horses, and these, at the time, were browsing somewhere within ten miles of where they were wanted. So that Deadwood Dick was free to thunder away up the gulch on his charger, unpursued, while the mighty walls of mountain rock echoed back his wild laugh mockingly. With terrible rage Roxly realized that he was again a subject of defeat.

Among those who escaped from the saloon in the rush, was Red-Hot Harris, the boss poker-player. He slipped away unnoticed and hurried off into the darkness, taking the course toward the Deadwood Dick Bonanza, a puzzled expression upon his handsome, fearless face, and a strange gleam in his black, magnetic eye.

"It is time for me to be elsewhere!" he muttered, striking a match and glancing at his diamond-set gold watch. "I left the old galoot at eight; it is now nearly ten, and time I was back. That road-agent chap luckily freed me from what promised to be a precarious situation. Thanks be to him! I guess I'll be all right in the future. Ha! a fire, by all that's holy!"

He had now reached the upper end of the town, when chancing to look back, he perceived that several tents and one frame shanty were in flames, near the other end of the town, at the end of Eureka gulch. Loud yells of anger, borne on the evening breeze, proclaimed that the citizens of Eureka had discovered the fires. Men, women and children were hurrying frantically in the direction of the flaming buildings, the light of which lit up the heavens with a lurid reflection.

"Ha! I remember!" Red-Hot muttered, passing his hand over his brow. "Deadwood Dick said this blow would be fire, and yonder's the blow! The next will be blood! Ha! ha! ha! but look; yonder are flames creeping up two cabins at this end of town! And now men are coming this way, which makes it necessary for an individual of about my size to vamoose!"

He watched the fire for a few moments only, then hurried up the lonely gulch, at a brisk pace.

Deadwood Dick had made a threat of fire; now he was executing it.

Unknown incendiaries were applying the torch to the dry crisp shanties, without being seen, and the heavens were growing lighter each and every minute.

Men, women and children were rushing about in confusion; every heart was filled with indignation and fear; consternation and anger were the prevailing passions, as the Eurekaites looked helplessly on to behold the conflagration that was destroying their hard-earned homes. A few puny attempts were

made to check the flames by the application of buckets of water, but there was a strong breeze astir, and all efforts were fruitless.

Old Roxly, the Deadwood Regulator, was perhaps the coolest man on the spot, despite the fact of his late defeat. He gathered around him a score of armed miners, and spread them around, promiscuously, with the order to shoot the first incendiary seen, without mercy, while, after a little delay, he posted a guard on every house-top in the town, with the same instructions.

This ended the conflagration, and Eureka owed its redemption to the hardened old Regulator, who had sworn to hunt Deadwood Dick to death, or pass in his checks in the attempt. No more fires were set, and when the dozen buildings, all told, had burned to the ground, the fiery bluish died out of the heavens and darkness once more reigned supreme.

A strict watch had been kept at both ends of the town, but none of Deadwood Dick's band had been seen to escape.

Were they still within the village, intending to strike again when quiet was restored? Many feared that such would be the case, but were happily disappointed; they were not again molested that night.

After leaving the Flag of Truce Hotel, on the termination of his interview with Cathie, Carlos Cambre turned into a street which ran crosswise of the gulch, and hurried along, a low chuckle occasionally breaking from his lips.

"My scheme has worked like a charm, thus far," he muttered, glancing sharply around to see that no one was within hearing. "Cathie is in my power, and I have nothing to fear from her. Deadwood Dick is undoubtedly her child, by Fordyce Grayford, although he knows it not. The case stands now between him and these later children of the old miser. Whoever will pay the most shall have these papers."

And the villain chuckled again and again at the cleverness of his plot and its prospect of success.

He kept a sharp outlook upon all sides, not knowing when he might receive a blow from some unseen enemy. One cannot exist without more or less enemies out in the wild, rough West. But his vigilance did not detect a slight, trim figure that constantly shadowed him—had shadowed him, unknown and unseen, ever since his arrival in Eureka.

He went straight to the cottage of John Jones, who drove the Eureka stage, and found that individual very comfortably ensconced upon the doorsill of his habitation, perusing the latest Portland paper.

Jones was a brawny fellow, who had roughed it twenty years in the West since he was a youth of seventeen, and had a big heart, which made him as good-natured as the day was long. He bowed familiarly as Cambre approached, and made room upon the sill, but the ex-leutenant declined the proffered seat with a smile.

"I cannot sit down," he said. "I came to inquire when you fetched in a young woman with a baby, on your stage?"

"Le'me see. A young woman and a baby, eh? Wal, I fetched in two last week, three the week before, and one this week; day before yesterday; so you see it's hard tellin' which you mean."

"I should say so. But, the one I have reference to has red hair, and is only of medium stature—very pretty in form and face."

"Dunno nothin' 'bout it. Once got my own ha'r pulled fer commentin' on the beauties of another woman's capillary possessions."

"Where did you drop all these six women with babies?"

"All at the Man-Trap; but none o' 'em stayed there long, you bet!"

Cambre turned away, without thanks for the information he had obtained. It looked as if there might be some trouble in finding Leone and her child. Very likely she would remain in seclusion, until she could effect a reconciliation with Deadwood Dick.

The first alarm of the fire had just been given when Cambre reached the main street; men, women and children were hurrying in every direction, confused and excited.

"Oh! what if it should be my home, and Leone and Dickie asleep!" muttered one girlish figure, that flitted by toward the flames that were leaping skyward. The words were hardly spoken above a whisper, yet Cambre caught them, and his heart gave an exultant bound.

"Here is my clew, when least expected!" he muttered, springing off in pursuit of the girl whom he now recognized as Noisy Nell of the Man-Trap shooting gallery. "Surely there cannot be two Leones in Eureka, as there are two Deadwood Dicks."

Noisy Nell soon reached a shanty inclosed by a rough, unpainted picket fence, which stood in close proximity to one of the burning buildings, and Cambre was close to her heels.

A female figure clasping a very young babe in her arms, stood leaning upon the gate, watching the conflagration, and uttered a little cry of joy when Nell hurried up.

"Oh! is it you, sister? I was just out enjoying the fire. I always did glory in watching a great fire," with a light shivering laugh.

"I feared it was my shanty, and that you would be very much frightened," Nelly Brandon replied, opening the gate and stepping inside the yard, which she had adorned with a few beds of fragrant posies. "I guess you are not much of a coward after all."

"No; my later life has hardened me—both in body and soul. I defy everybody now, and stand upon my guard."

She spoke with bitterness rooted in her tones; it was plain she was losing faith in the world, and its people.

"And yet they say that Deadwood Dick, your hus-

band, is the cause of this fire. There was a young man in the Man-Trap to-night, calling himself Red-Hot Harris, whom I and everybody else took to be Deadwood Dick. Roxly, the Deadwood Regulator, undertook to arrest him, when in rode your husband on his jetty horse, and attired in his costume of black, and ordered him to desist. Then he told them this blow would be fire, and the next blood, after which he made a dash, and escaped."

"And what became of this Red-Hot Harris, sister?"

"He escaped when the crowd rushed from the saloon in search of Dick. He claimed to be your husband's twin brother, is a very counterpart of him, and offers five hundred dollars reward for the deliverance of Deadwood Dick into his hands."

Leone looked puzzled. "Was not this Red-Hot Harris my husband, then?" she asked, eagerly, her flushed face showing how much she was interested.

"Oh! no. I believed so, at first, but not after I saw the man on horseback. It was the same dashing, handsome figure you have so often and eloquently described to me."

A flush of proud joy—genuine enthusiasm, swept over Leone's pale face.

She was changed somewhat since we last saw her (in Wild Ivan); her form had lost some of its roundness, but still retained all its old grace of motion; a maturer expression was given to her pale, pretty face, and a softer light to her eye—though there was ever worn about her lips a haunting expression of pitiful regret and sorrow.

She had never ceased to love her outlaw husband; she felt that her love was a thousand times stronger now that she had his and her baby boy in her young mother's arms—the little, plump, crowing cherub that was the very picture of Deadwood Dick; and she never spoke but in a loving, endearing way of him who had so cruelly deserted her, for was she not in a measure to blame? Nor had she given up hope of a final and happy reunion.

"Perhaps the horseman was my Eddie," she said, "but I can hardly believe that he was the cause of this fire. He swore that he would no longer lead the life of a road-agent, and I never knew him to break his word."

"And do you think he would dare ride so boldly into the saloon?" Nell asked, wonderingly.

"Dare? Why, miss, Deadwood Dick would dare ride into the very gates of the Infernal Regions, if he had any business there!" said a low, insinuating voice, and Carlos Cambre stepped into the presence of the two girls. "Good-evening, Mrs. Harris! This is rather an unexpected pleasure to meet you here."

"Why, is it really you, Mr. Cambre?" and Leone put out one hand, which he pressed warmly. "I did not know you were here, when I came."

"Did you not? Well, you see I am; and Deadwood Dick and that old scoundrel, the Injun Annihilator, are both here. Presently old friends will meet. Hello! is this the juvenile Deadwood Dick?" and the ex-leutenant attempted to take the little bundle of humanity in his arms, but the youngster set up such a piteous howl, that the man shrunk back.

"Yes, this is my son," Leone said, hushing Master Dick's screams, "and he is all I have left to depend upon. Mr. Cambre, what ever became of Edith Stone?"

The ex-leutenant stared. "Why, did you not hear? She drowned herself in the Little Madras, all for the love of Deadwood Dick."

A pained, regretful expression came upon Leone's face.

"Poor child," she murmured, a tear glistening in either eye; "I was wrong in being so harsh to her. She could not help it; hers was infatuation, while mine was love. Poor Edith!"

"She is better off now, Mrs. Harris. It is a dangerous thing, sometimes, for two women to worship the same man."

"True, very true. Mr. Cambre, my dear friend, here, tells me that there were two men in the Man-Trap saloon to-night, who looked like my husband, one calling himself Red-Hot Harris, he being undisguised, while the other was rigged out like the Prince of the Road, and called himself Deadwood Dick. Which was Deadwood Dick?"

"That's a conundrum I will not agree to answer, dear lady. Undoubtedly Deadwood Dick in this case, was Deadwood Dick. I thought at first that Red-Hot Harris was Deadwood Dick, myself, for the two are near counterparts, but I don't believe he is Deadwood Dick's brother; in fact, I am positive that he is not. As the matter now stands, there appears to be two or three Deadwood Dicks in the field."

"One of whom takes pleasure in presenting himself for your inspection!" cried a clear, ringing voice. "Carlos Cambre, remember that on the 20th of November you are doomed to die the death of a dog!"

CHAPTER VIII.

GHOSTLY MYSTERY—A WARNING.

It would be hard to describe the feelings of the miners and Old Avalanche, when the mysterious Phantom Miner was seen descending. They were appalled at the weird spectacle, and stood rooted to the spot, unable to flee or speak, until, by a great effort, the Annihilator mastered his fright, and gave a yell of horror, which aroused the others, and all fled across the basin pell-mell, toward the tunnel.

At the mouth of this they stopped, and gazed back toward the spot they had just vacated.

The Phantom had descended to the ground, and in his robes of ghostly white and surrounded by that unearthly halo of bluish light, was stalking about camp, examining things in general.

"Great ham-bone thet was the last sickness of old

Joner!" exclaimed Old Avalanche, so overcome with the mystery and terror of the situation that he was forced to sit down upon a convenient rock. "Boy-ees, this is ther first time ther great Annihilator's ever bin skeered. Afire ithe devil!"

"Give it up," replied little Alf Coyle. "Tain't nothin' human, I'll swar!"

"On course it ain't!" declared Keno, contemptuously, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "It's a ghost, thet's what it is. Allers knew thar war sich things. Proved it once, too. My old mother-in-law kicked the bucket, about six years ago, up in Minnesota, an' fearin' the old hornet would escape confinement, I drewed six load o' big stum onter her grave, an' darn my socks ef she didn't rise right out o' thet grave, an' chase me six mile thru the woods, till I fainted."

"Good! served ye right," declared Old Avalanche. "Learnt ye ter let mother-in-laws alone, I guess. Got learnt su'thin' o' ther kind once, myself. Tried ter pizen ther old woman, an' she chawed off about an inch o' my nose. Boyees, d'ye parseve w'at thet hog-goblin speert iz after? He's snoopin' around, seein' ef he ken't find sum more a'fiferous, true's thunder!"

"Some more? Then he tuk yours, eh?" demanded Keno, suspiciously.

"Yas, boyees; may's well own up. Met ther 'farnal thing in ther tunnel, an' it petrified me stiffer'n a poker by jest lookin' at me, an' after skinnin' me o' every grain, swooped off an' left me. When I recovered, I kim back ter camp. Tain't no use talkin', pilgrims: et's a genuine speert, I plugged seven chunks o' lead right at it, out o' my revolver, an' ther consarned thing larfed jest as if et enjoyed thet sort o' fazzic—did, by gracious!"

"Old man, ef I hedn't seen you do sum good shootin', I shouldn't be surprised. As it is, I'm tee-totally knocked way out o' all calculation."

"Thar goes our a'fiferous cuss-durn, the speert!" growled Coyle, as the Phantom was seen to approach a large box in which the miners kept their gold, and lift the lid. "Oh! great Jerusalem, jest wait till I sight him," and the young miner threw his long-barreled rifle to his shoulder. But Old Avalanche interfered.

"Don't dispense your fazzic yet, boyees," he said.

"One bullet wouldn't effect thet hog-goblin no more'n would a flea-bite. We must creep down ter ther camp, and make a rush upon et, or our gold is gone whar ther woodbine twineh. Come, now, down on yer horizontal, an' do sum o' yer tallest, wigglin', an' when ye hear ther Annihilator yell out 'scout', jist lay fer thet Phantom w' yer revolvers, an' put moar holes in him than ye'll find in a pair o' yearling socks."

Ready to obey one whom they knew to be fearless, the miners threw themselves upon their hands and knees and crept toward the camp, resolved to make one more attempt to extirpate the Phantom.

It was still there, evidently sampling the contents of the strong-box, which the miners had negligently left unlocked. The halo of bluish light still surrounded the ghostly figure, like a shroud; everything about the object seemed unearthly.

Closer and closer crept the miners, old Avalanche at their head. Now they were only a dozen yards from the mysterious Phantom, when slowly the apparition soared upward into the darkness—is gone! while the astounded miners creep on to their campfire, speechless and horrified at what they had seen.

The strong-box they found to be rifled of every grain of gold, as they had expected. The Phantom was a thief as well as a spirit, then.

"Boyees!" the Annihilator said, wiping his dampened forehead. "I've bin thru more infarnelated scrapes an' adventurs' than most feller humans o' my age, but I'll be durned ef I ever hed enny genooine hog-goblins ter wrastle w' before. I hed sum doubts, awhile ago, thet this war no speert, but I'm satisfied o' my mistake, now. Et aire ther pure quill!"

"Exactly!" added Keno, decisively. "It are a genuine floatin' evaporated soul, right fresh out o' the regions of Tinctoarius!"

"Which settles it thet Little Alf Coyle ain't a goin' ter stay in Deadwood Dick's Bonanza any longer," announced that individual, venturing to light his pipe, now that the Phantom had gone. "I propose we evacuate."

"Nixy! Thes great devastatin' Injun eppyzootic o' ther peraries aire goin' ter stay an' fight it out on this line if it takes all winter. An' I'll paste thet ga-loot beauchful thet dares go an' desert!" cried the old leader.

The miners exchanged glances. They knew the veteran would not hesitate to back his words—that it would be certain death to that one who made the first move to desert.

"I'm with ther Annihilator," said Keno, promptly. "I can make my five dollars a day hear, an' thar ain't no ghosts goin' ter scare me away. Speakin' o' ghosts, gentlemen, reminds me thet I once hed an uncle whose speert riz frum ther grave. He'd allus bin a tough old seed, an' one day when I war plantin' thistles on his grave, he poked his speert up out o' ground, an' axed me how much ther fare war ter Greenland—sed they hed so much summer weatther down in his kentry thet it effected his constitution, an' he proposed ter emigrate further north."

"Correct! You may pass up to the head o' the class, Mr. Keno," said Coyle. "Fazzic, we'll hear frum you."

"Hain't got a substitute, boyees," replied the Annihilator, slowly. "I've jist bin studiy' on an fice. Why not go an' set fire ter yonder old cabin? Red Brand sed thar's whar ther Phantom Miner held his quarters."

"Yas, an' look! thar's ther cuss-darned thing, now!" cried Alf, pointing toward the cabin. With

dilated eyes, the miners saw the Phantom slowly descend out of mid-air and enter the old vine-wreathed habitation.

"Now's our time, lads!" whispered Avalanche, excitedly. "The bird's caged, an' we'll shemle it. Snatch a torch an' kim along. Their old smell's dry, an' it burn like old been-zeen!"

He plucked a burning brand from the fire, and his companions did likewise; then in a body they rushed toward the old cabin, looking wild and weird under the flaring torchlight. Not a word was spoken, but, like so many fiery dragons, they plunged on, and at last stood by the side of the cabin, which was fast yielding to the ravages of worms and decay.

The work of setting the fire in half a dozen places was but of a moment: then the miners drew back at a safe distance, and watched the flames run madly through the crisp dry vines that covered the cabin walls. They crackled, and leaped high toward the heavens, luridly illumining the black night.

Eagerly the miners watched the spectacle, believing that they had successfully triumphed over the Phantom—had caged it in this fiery trap.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Little Alf, gleefully, "it's good-by, Phantom Miner, now. Hark! don't ye hear him crying in yonder furnace?"

"He's a gone goose, I reckon," replied Keno, "unless ye ken't scorch sperits. I never hed enny sperience in thet line, myself."

"Scorch nothin'!" suddenly cried Avalanche.

"Look!" and he pointed toward the burning cabin. The vines had nearly burned away, and the flames were beginning to creep over the dry logs, when all at once that mysterious apparition of the Phantom appeared upon the roof, which was surrounded by leaping flames. A wild, awful shriek; then the thing began swiftly to arise, and floated like a cloud of up into the blackness of the overcast heavens, until lost from view.

The startling words of threat caused Carlos Cambre to wheel about, his hand seeking a revolver in his belt. But he paused and hesitated, when his eyes rested on the black knight of road-agents—the familiar, somber-clad figure of Deadwood Dick.

"You?" he gasped, allowing his hand to drop to his side.

"Yes, I!" replied the young outlaw. "I saw you here, and came to see if you have forgotten your mission."

"N-no! of course not," the ex-lieutenant faltered, quailing beneath the other's stern gaze. "But, you must give me time."

"Until the 26th—your death-day!" was the cool, stern answer.

"Dick! oh! Dick! Is this really you?"

Leone had put her babe into the arms of Noisy Nell, and sprung eagerly forward—stood before the man in black, hopeful, and oh! so fearful he would repulse her advance.

He looked down at her a moment; then put his arm gently around her, drawing her close to him.

"Leone, again we meet—unexpectedly, for I supposed you far from here. But, we must part. My oath still must remain unbroken. Is that the—our boy?"

"Yes, that is our Dick," Leone said, reaching for the babe that he might more closely inspect it.

"See, Dick, this is your papa! Oh! Eddie, he is all I have left, now, since you deserted me. Oh! my husband," and her voice was lowered to a whisper, "will you never come back?"

"Sometime, peerless!" was the low reply, then he turned upon his heel, and strode away into the darkness.

Cambre soon followed. He saw no chance of stealing the child at present, and besides, he had work to attend to, elsewhere.

After he had gone, Leone and Noisy Nell stood in their front yard, and watched the progress of the flames for some time. But at last they grew tired of the glare, and retired into the shanty, which was Nellie Brandon's home. There were but a couple of rough rooms, but these were neatly furnished, and cheerful.

Leone seated herself before a low fire which burned upon the hearth, clasping infant Dick close to her breast. There were tears in her eyes, for the words of Deadwood Dick had been more painful than comforting. They had illy-fed the craving desire within her breast—she could scarcely believe that it was really so. Yet, who else could play his part so faultlessly? Ah! it must be he; but yet so cold and changed from the once loving Deadwood Dick.

He had betrayed no sign of a surviving passion for her; he had merely given her darling baby-boy a careless glance—he had said: "Sometime, peerless!" and then was gone; what comfort to her?

She was crying softly to herself, when Noisy Nell came and seated herself by the fire.

"What! crying again, Mrs. Harris? Please don't; you will cry your pretty eyes out, some of these days."

"Oh! I cannot help it, Nelly. You don't know any thing about it, for you were never the mother of a loved husband's child, and that husband estranged from you. Oh! it seems, sometimes, as if I could not live this life much longer, without him. You were never in love, Nellie!"

"Never," the girl answered, staring moodily into the fire. "I've been roughing it alone for ten years—since I was eight, but no one ever seemed to care for me, unless some rough attempted to make himself familiar, when he generally got paid back in his own coin. I've seen those I think I could have loved, but they were such as don't often notice girls in my position. Guess there ain't much attractions about Noisy Nell."

And then there came a bitter little laugh from the girl, that was sad to hear.

"Oh! do not despair. Pretty girls like you cannot always escape observation and admiration. I hope, however, that you will find a happier lot than I have. Oh! I am utterly wretched and miserable. I care not to live unless I can have my darling back again."

"How did you come to part, dear sister? You promised to tell me your story, but never have."

"No, because it is painful to rehearse the scenes I try to forget," replied Leone, closing her eyes wearily. She soon roused, however, and told her story in a pitiful way, that affected Nelly Brandon to tears.

But she did not screen herself in the recital—told it as it was, even to holding Deadwood Dick blameless.

"And do you know," Nelly said, after she had listened attentively to the story, "that, after what I have heard, I do not believe that was your husband at the gate to-night? It was some outlaw who has an inkling of your history, and is working up some heinous plot, using Mr. Harris's name as a shield to his identity. I saw your husband in company with Old Avalanche, a couple of weeks ago, on the night of their arrival in Eureka, but I do not believe that this was he whom we saw to-night."

"Then is not Red-Hot Harris and this man the same? I am sure the former is not Dick's brother, for I never heard him mention that he had one. He has a sweet sister—Mrs. Anita McKenzie—in Deadwood, but I never saw, or heard him speak of having a brother."

"I hardly think Red-Hot Harris was this man to-night, for he would hardly have had time to have changed his costume after escaping from the Man-Trap, until this so-called Deadwood Dick came along. There is a mystery somewhere, which I cannot solve."

"I believe I would like to see Old Avalanche; he might explain."

"Hardly, I think, for even he knows nothing of the whereabouts of your husband, not having seen him since the first night of their arrival here."

At this instant there came a timorous knock at the door; then the sound of retreating footsteps.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Nellie, picking up a paper that had been thrust under the door. "Ha! mercy! Listen, Leone; it is a warning to you:

"Fly, without delay. If you have male friends, seek them. Above all, beware of Carlos Cambre. He is scheming to steal your child, to deliver into the hands of a man—Deadwood Dick No. 2. Never leave the babe unprotected. Will report further, anon."

CHAPTER IX.

A CLEW OF CRIME—FLEEING FROM FOES.

On the morning succeeding the fire, when the excitement of the night was somewhat subdued, the Eurekaites gave their attention to the matter of the murder and robbery at the Oaks.

Cornell, the man-servant who had brought the report, accompanied by Murrill, a newly appointed sheriff, and Roxly, the Regulator, with a posse of armed men, set out for the scene of the massacre, as soon as day dawned to investigate matters, for, although Fordyce Grayford was a miser and not a general favorite, his influence was not to be despised.

Little information could be obtained of Cornell concerning the affair, more than that immediately after dark, on the preceding night, a band of masked outlaws had surprised the household while they were at supper, and had shot them down without mercy, he, Cornell, being the only one to escape. The outlaws did not seem to have any particular leader, but appeared to understand their work as if it had previously been planned out.

On their arrival at the mansion, the servant's statement was found to be correct, all except that Fordyce Grayford was not dead, but seriously wounded. His wife, son, and daughter and five servants lay dead where they had been shot down.

The old speculator was wounded in a dozen places, and faint and exhausted from a great loss of blood, but had managed to drag himself about from place to place, leaving a gory trail wherever he had gone.

He seemed relieved when he saw that friends had come.

"Do you suspect the author of this fearful tragedy, Captain Grayford?" asked Murrill, the new sheriff.

"No! God only knows who can have struck me such a blow. But that he is numbered with the dead, there is one I could suspect, for he has several times of late threatened my life."

"Ah! perhaps we've already struck a clew. To whom do you refer?"

"To my son, who lies dead, yonder. But I cannot suspect him, now."

"Ah! he may be the traitor; there is no telling. Men, remove these bodies and see that they are prepared for burial. Roxly, you are a good surgeon; dress the captain's wounds."

And after giving these orders, the sheriff went over to the stark, stiff body of young Grayford, and went through the pockets of his clothing.

He had once been in the detective service, was shrewd, well educated, and quick to draw correct conclusions. At least, it proved so in this case.

From among other things taken from the young man's pockets, he soon selected a small note, penned in a bold, graceful hand. It had been written on the day before, and ran as follows:

"The men will come. It is best I should not accompany them. Look out for yourself about nine in the evening."

"Ha! ha! Cambre," muttered Murrill, scratching his head. "As long as I have been in Eureka I never

before heard that name. Either it is an assumed one, or else this Cambre is a new arrival. Let me see. I will keep this matter close, and work up the case without publicity. I feel like trying my hand in the detective line again."

He put the paper in his pocket, and helped remove the bodies. The old speculator was fixed up as best he could be under the circumstances, and left in care of a couple of competent nurses. The aims of the outlaw-ruffians had been, no doubt, to murder the household, and then rob the safe of the hoards of money which Fordyce Grayford was supposed to possess. But in this they were baffled. They had blown open the safe, but, according to the old speculator, had found no booty, as he had several days before buried his treasure where no one could find it except himself. Thus had the outlaws realized nothing but blood for their crime.

Sheriff Murrill went back to Eureka, and made careful inquiries after a man named Cambre, but amid the seething populace of the Infant Deadwood, no one knew aught concerning the individual in question. A governor or president might have been among the surging throng that ever swarmed in the streets, without being recognized.

But Murrill was not baffled. He was possessed of great patience, and one failure by no means discouraged him. He resolved to watch and wait, trusting to luck and his own keen powers of perception to sift the matter to the bottom. If a Cambre there was in Eureka, he was satisfied he could find him.

Later in the day he shouldered his rifle, and set off up the gulch, having in mind to shoot a deer if one came conveniently within range. But a couple of hours' wandering among the mountain crags put him all out of the notion of game, and seating himself upon a natural rocky platform, he drew the little piece of paper from his pocket, and scanned the few lines, eagerly. This was a game that was well worth capturing, if Grayford offered a reward, which he undoubtedly would.

"Cambre! Cambre! I am sure I never heard the name. Sort of a Spanish one, I should say. And what now becomes necessary, is that I should discover the whereabouts of this individual. He is the author of this murder at the Oaks, and Grayford's son was in league with him, but accidentally got into the trap he had helped to lay. This note says, 'look out for yourself about nine in the evening.' Cornell states that the attack and massacre were made at seven; which accounts for matters a little. Hang it! I wish I could find some one who knows this Cambre."

"Wishes are often unexpectedly realized!" said a cool voice, close at hand, and Murrill glanced quickly around to behold a person seated astride a bowlder directly in his rear, where he had evidently been for some moments a listener to the sheriff's muttered soliloquy. "I happen to know this same individual you are in quest of."

"Eh! you do?" exclaimed Murrill, staring curiously at the handsome black-clad figure, whose face was masked and shaded by a broad *sombrero*. "Who are you, pray?"

"It hardly matters. I am one whom the world drives before it—an outcast, a wanderer, and an ex-road-agent chief."

"You are Deadwood Dick?" Murrill exclaimed, growing a little uneasy, for he perceived that the young outlaw's hand rested upon a revolver, while he dared not reach for one.

"Yes, Deadwood Dick, if you like it that way," was the indifferent reply. "The man that strikes back when struck at. Don't fear; I shall not offer you harm as long as you find it convenient to mind your own business. You know how the other sheriff departed. It was all because of rash hot-headedness."

"You say so, because you recognize no law, young man."

"No more I don't. But didn't I offer to make amends, and become an honest loyal citizen, if the people of Eureka would accept of me? Yes, you know I did, and they chose my hate rather than my friendship. They shall have all they want of it, which do you prefer, sir?"

Murrill reflected. He had no grudge against this youth. Why should he enlist against him, when apparently his friendship would not be despised.

"I prefer your friendship. We can more advantageously become friends than enemies, I think. I have nothing against you, and if it is agreeable we can be friends in earnest."

"It is agreeable, decidedly," Deadwood Dick said, sliding down from his perch, and extending his black-gloved hand. "I have so few true friends in the world, that I am anxious to add to the list. I think you are one whom I can trust."

"Implicitly. My friendship is lasting, and you will find me ready to strike in defense of a friend."

"I ask no one to fight my battles," replied the ex-road-agent, proudly. "All my life I have had to depend upon my own muscle. I can fight the battle on alone. All I ask is that they will give me time to pray for every soul I send to perdition; then I am ready to receive them."

"You look at matters on the wrong side," Murrill said, when he had listened to a part of Harris's eventful history. "You can easily quit this sort of life, by going East, where you are unknown. Take my advice and go. Hunt up your deserted wife and boy, and leave this western sod forever behind you."

But Deadwood Dick shook his head.

"No, I could not live away from the West. I should die out in the tame Eastern States. Besides, how long do you suppose I'd remain unmolested by the bloodhounds of the law?"

"Perhaps for years—"

"Not a month. I'll wager my life I'm not un-

known there. Chicago and Cincinnati, even, have entered into competition in the race for the rewards set upon my head. No, I shall remain in the West, and fight it out on this line to the end. I see that counterfeiters are being shoved on the market—that is, *sham* Deadwood Dicks. We have one here in Eureka—the same individual who rode into the Man-Trap saloon last night, and afterward fired the town. I wish to meet this chap, and learn where he obtained the right to use my copyrighted handle!"

"Then you say that was *not* you?"

"Swear to it, if necessary. Saw part of the fire from a distance. Was in the saloon at the same time this bogus Deadwood Dick entered."

"Ha! then you were, after all, Red-Hot Harris?" the sheriff exclaimed, shrewdly.

The road-prince laughed.

"Bah! Red-Hot Harris claims to be my brother, but he is not. I do not possess one of those branches of relation. He looks so much like me, that he has to manufacture some yarn to prevent being strung up in my place. My wife's brother passed in his checks thus, on account of a great resemblance to me. As it happened in Deadwood, you may have heard of it?"

"Yes, at the time. Resemblance to a criminal I should say would be undesirable. And, now, about this Cambre! You know him, eh?"

"Ought to. He was a lieutenant in my road-agent band, before I left them."

"Ah! that is good. Do you think you would know him, at sight?"

Certainly. I owe him a grudge, and shall not forget him. You want him in connection with this massacre affair, eh?"

"Yes." Then the sheriff showed him the paper, and related what he knew on the subject of the attack and murder.

"Cambre and Grayford's son were undoubtedly in the plot," Dick said, after listening attentively. "Cambre is sly and wary, yet I know him to be a villain. You have proof enough to hang him. Follow up your clew, after the description I have given you, and let me know the result."

"When will I see you again?"

"Impossible to say, as my movements are uncertain. A letter left on this rock, however, will reach me. This is Deadwood Dick's post-office!"

Then, after a few more words and a cordial handshake, the two men separated, Murrill descending into the gulch, and tramping off toward Eureka, which lay some six miles below.

Startling and crushing was the intelligence the note brought to poor Leone Harris—that the only man she had thought her friend, was in reality an enemy. And it was his intention to attempt the kidnapping of her babe, that the innocent thing might be delivered into the hands of this Deadwood Dick No. 2. Who was this Deadwood Dick No. 2? Why did he wish to obtain possession of her child? All these questions flashed across her mind with lightning rapidity, when Noisy Nell finished reading the strange missive.

"Oh! Nellie!" the poor young wife exclaimed, tears coursing down her pale cheeks. "What shall I do? Where shall I go? What does it all mean?"

"It means that there is more devilry afoot than we have imagined. I did not like the looks of that Carlos Cambre. He is a villain," replied the girl.

"Ah! it seems so, but I never thought him other than a friend, before. But now that I think of it, he has several times said things to me that were unwarranted and ungentlemanly. Ah! since the death of my brother, all the world has tried to deal me a blow. Nellie, do you know what I begin to believe?—though God knows the suspicion may be an unjust one."

"No, sweet sister. What?"

"This—that my husband hates me, and by doing away with the child and then with myself, he intends to free himself of marriage bonds, so that he will again be at liberty to woo and win!"

"Surely you do not think him so base as this, Mrs. Harris?"

"Maybe I am very wrong, but I cannot see how else these things can be. I know of no earthly enemy who could wish to harm me through my child."

"Ah! you are greatly at fault, my dear. Deadwood Dick is no such villain, I am well satisfied, from what little I saw of him. Perhaps this Dick No. 2 is some one who has a grudge against Dick No. 1, and takes the method of striking at him through you."

"Ah! Nellie, you are an angel," Leone said, laying Master Dick upon the bed, and embracing her friend. "You can see things in a truer light than I. Of course my Dick is no such villain, and I have deeply wronged him by my unjust suspicion. But, what shall I do? It is necessary that I should find another place, as I will no longer be safe here. My poor baby Dick! Can it be that your young life is to be beset with perils and be forever hunted like that of your fearless father? Oh! heaven forbid! In the morning I will take you to the Big Bonanza Mine, where Avalanche is at work, and he will protect you. We might go in the darkness, but many unseen dangers might be in our path. Daylight will answer best."

So they remained up through the long night, watching for the first streak of light in the eastern sky heralding the approach of dawn.

Morning came at last, cloudy and dull, with a prospect of a long drizzling rain, such as the autumnal months bring.

Nell was the owner of a couple of saddle-horses, and mounted upon these, the two girls rode through

the town, and up the gulch in the direction of Deadwood Dick's Bonanza.

Nothing was seen of Carlos Cambre, and a hope entered Leone's heart that she would yet escape him. Once under the protection of Old Avalanche, she felt that she would be safe.

But alas! how sudden hopes may be blasted, and their fruit destroyed.

They were yet a quarter of a mile from the entrance to the mine, when, on looking back, they beheld Cambre coming furiously on in pursuit, his animal covered with flecks of foam.

He was not to be defeated!

CHAPTER X.

A FEMALE DETECTIVE—INVASION.

THAT night following the flight of Leone and Nelly from Eureka, found the Man-Trap saloon filled to overflowing, both with miners and men-about town, together with the new-comers fetched in by the evening stage. Almost every type of character, from the negro, all through the various imported foreign races, down to the plain-faced Yankee, was represented within the crowded whisky den; men who, for long years, had dabbled in crime, were here, as were new beginners in the bloody field of action. A study of the rough-bearded faces, some kindly of expression while others were repulsive and villainous, would have revealed a great deal in the history of human nature. Could all those faces have had their tale written out in plain English, such startling events might be brought to light as would startle a nation.

Drinking, gambling, fighting and general carousal were, as usual, the order of the evening, in which all hands were occasionally forced to participate or "ante out." And then, like enough, that unlucky individual who refused to share the "fun," would be followed and mauled by the drunken crowd. This is how they do things in "brown style" in the lively little unmapped city of Eureka.

No man is too good to fight there—none need be too pious to absorb moisture at fifty cents a drink, or swear a streak as long as a search-warrant.

The one church of Eureka had boasted of but one minister, who preached to a congregation of four or five "religious," with a pair of cocked revolvers by the side of his Bible on the pulpit desk. But he had, ere long, tired, and flown to other fields, where his efforts, we hope, were more fully appreciated.

Deadwood Dick was among those within the room which constituted the saloon, but he was in deep disguise as a rough miner. He had a desire to see the wife of Carlos Cambre, whom it will be remembered, he encountered on the first night of his arrival in Deadwood. He knew she would aid him materially in discovering Cambre himself, if he were in hiding or disguise.

He spied the *petite* little figure ere long, flitting about and serving drinks to the thirsty patrons of the establishment. Pretty of face, he inwardly pronounced it a pity to see her spending her life in such a den as this, where oaths and indecent language were the order of the hour.

It was some time before she passed where he was lounging at a table, and he had a chance to hail her.

"What is it?" she demanded, coming up with a number of beer glasses upon her tray.

"Bring me a glass of light wine; also one for yourself. I wish to talk with you a while."

"Who are you?" she questioned, looking him over, suspiciously. "What do you want of me?"

"You will learn in time. Fear not, for I am Deadwood Dick!"

She gave a nervous start, as if the intelligence surprised her; then nodded her head and went away.

It was full an hour, and Dick was growing impatient, when she reappeared, bringing the wine.

"Indeed! have you come at last? You must imagine a fellow's appetite is not strong!" he said.

"It is probably not stronger than that of these thirsty brutes around us," was the reply. "I knew you wanted news more than beverage, so I let you wait."

"And have you news that will interest me?"

"I just have. I have a story—or part of one—to tell you. But, first, what do you want to know?—what brought you here?"

"Curiosity—longing for adventure—want of news," he replied, with a smile from his jetty-black orbs. "Where is your so-called husband—Carlos Cambre?"

"About town somewhere, plotting mischief, as usual. Went up the gulch to-day, after Noisy Nell and Leone—"

"What!" Deadwood Dick exclaimed, starting violently. "Leone, you say—surely not my Leone—my wife?"

"Yes, your wife, Mr. Harris. She is here; has been here for a couple of weeks. Cambre has got a plot afoot to steal her babe, and deliver it up to this Deadwood Dick No. 2, whoever that may be. I warned her, and saw her and Nell Brandon ride up toward Bonanza Basin. Cambre followed, and I would have done likewise, only that my attention was called to matters here."

"And you do not know what became of them, then?"

"No, but I think they were far enough ahead to reach the Bonanza before he overtook them."

"I hope so. He is a worse villain than I ever before took him to be. He was concerned in this Grayford massacre case."

"He was the head instigator of it!" Martha replied. "I know all about it. He and Grayford's son were in the plot together."

"Ah! you seem pretty well posted upon everything. How do you know so much?"

"I improve my spare time in shadowing my faithless husband and prying into his secrets. I find that there is a plot on the tapis, in which you are concerned. I cannot give you the full particulars now—not till I learn more. It appears that this Fordyce Grayford has a wife and son living by a first marriage. He deserted his first wife—or she deserted him, it is hard to tell which—and wedded again. Now this first wife turns up, and as soon as she can produce her son-heir, whom she has traced here to Eureka, she intends to lay claim to the property—or, rather, intended to. But, something has happened which will for a time check her progress. Cambre entered into her service a few weeks ago, and has, while helping her trace up this missing heir, learned the whole story, and stolen all her papers—marriage certificate, birth-paper, and so forth—with the intention of taking the game into his own hands."

"But what has all this to do with me?" Dick demanded, wondering.

"You are the first and only lawful son of Cathie and Fordyce Grayford!" replied Martha, in a low tone, that her words might not be overheard.

"Gilt out! what are you trying to give us now? My parents are long since in their grave, for which I am grateful to God, that they may not know the level to which their son has sunk," Dick replied.

"I have reason to think that you never knew your true parents, sir, but cannot at present give you any further information. Cambre holds the trump card in the possession of those papers, and I shall try to get them from him. He believes you to be the heir, and will probably try to negotiate with you, when you meet. But, don't mind him. Leave the matter to me, and all will yet come out right. See here;" and turning her back to the crowd, she partly opened the bosom of her dress. The glances Dick caught of a gleaming silver badge caused him to start.

"You are a—"

"Detective," finished she, with a peculiar little laugh. "You probably wonder how I came in possession of this badge. My father was one of the shrewdest and most successful detectives on the border, and on his death, the honor of an appointment was conferred upon me, because I had on several occasions materially aided him in capturing rogues. Thus I have the power to aid justice, even though but a woman. In my vocation here, I have chances to detect villainy, quite often."

"Doubtless. But this is all a great surprise to me, and I am naturally interested. I must now go and look after my wife, Leone, for should harm befall her, I could never forgive myself. I trust this matter in your hands, and when you learn anything, and wish to communicate, give a letter to Sheriff Murrill, and he will drop it in Deadwood Dick's post-office."

Then the young outlaw stalked toward the door of the saloon, looking strange in his rough dirty mining suit, and bushy red beard. But he was destined not to escape, unnoticed.

A brawny Californian, who had got more lliquid hell aboard than was good for his peace of mind, stepped forward, and intercepted him, a broad grin widening his flabby, stubbly countenance.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, pitching forward with a drunken leer, and extending his huge rough hand, "howdy do, Mr. Joaquin Murietta. How 'n thunder did you ever find yer way down here? Remember the time I blonged wi' ye—I'm Jim Salibuster the great water-melon o' Quincy Flats—"

He did not have time to finish the remainder of his information, for Deadwood Dick pushed him quickly aside, and made a leap for the door, just in time to escape a bullet from the revolver of Old Roxly.

He had evidently been suspected and the Californian used as a delay-post and trap. But this failed, for when the crowd swarmed out of the saloon Deadwood Dick was nowhere in sight.

"Oh! heaven, we are lost!" Leone exclaimed, as she beheld Cambre spurring madly toward them. "Ah! my poor baby boy, your battle against the world has indeed begun! How, oh! how will it end?"

"Do not despair, dear sister," replied Noisy Nell, "for there is nothing to fear, for you. Ride on, until you reach the entrance to the mine. You will not go amiss, for the sign 'Deadwood Dick's Bonanza,' will guide you toward the tunnel. Ride fearlessly through, and in the basin, beyond, you will find Old Avalanche."

"And you, Nelly—?"

"I will meet this villain, and turn him back. There! there! don't cry; I'm not afraid of him. I can shoot straighter than he, and I'll show him the style of girls they grow in Eureka. Go on now, and trust in God; he'll not desert you."

Saying which she reined in her steed, and whirled him around facing the coming horseman, while Leone pushed desperately on toward the Bonanza Mines.

Had she not been incumbered with her child, she would not have hesitated to have faced Cambre herself.

Noisy Nell waited with cool composure for the outlaw to come up, one of her fair hands grasping the bridle reins, and the other a small silver-plated revolver, which covered Cambre's approach.

She had spent nearly all her life amid scenes of peril and excitement, and had grown to take things coolly and indifferently. Few were there that knew her, in Eureka, who cared to insult her or provoke her anger, for she sent her bullets true, every time, and had laid out more ruffians than any other female in the rushing little city. Some had attempted to

blacken her name, but she held her own, and was respected by the ruffians—her greatest foes.

Cambre she believed to be an arrant knave, yet she feared him the least of all those whom she had encountered, although she could not tell just why.

He rode furiously up, but reined in when he perceived that her finger pulled the revolver-hammer back to full-cock—and that the weapon never quavered a particle. He had heard of her prowess, and concluded it his wisest part to stop and hold a parley.

"Well?" he interrogated, his face flushed with anger. "What do you want?"

"What do you want?" she returned, putting question for question.

"I want to pass. Are you a highway robber, that you block the way?"

"If you choose, yes. You are in pursuit of Leone Harris and her boy. You ought to know that she is not without friends, and I will tell you, further, that any attempt to steal her child will be useless. You cannot go any further in this direction, until she has had time to reach Bonanza Basin, where she will find a protector that you will not care to face."

The ex-lieutenant uttered a furious oath, and dropped his hand toward his belt. At the same time, there was a flash and a report, followed by a howl of pain and rage, as a bullet from her revolver pierced his arm near the elbow, causing a stream of blood to spurt therefrom.

"That's the ticket you get," she cried, with a cool laugh. "That is a short-trip ticket. Try any more such pretty moves, and I'll give you one that will take you to purgatory, on lightning time. Face about, apply the spurs, and away you go, Eureka-ward, or I'll make a case for the coroner's investigating committee!"

Cambre uttered a fiercer curse than before. He would have drawn a weapon and killed the girl, only that he knew that she would kill him. But one alternative was left, and that was to obey her command. So he turned his animal around, shaking his fist at Nell, with an expression of savage ferocity upon his countenance that would have frightened a less fearless girl.

"Go along, now, and get out of range as quick as possible, lest I be tempted to bullet-doze you yet!" she exclaimed, recocking her revolver, leisurely. "And mind that you don't have business up this way again, while I'm around, or there'll be one clock stopped."

"Oh! I'll have revenge for this, you she cat!" the baffled villain cried. "Look out for me, for your life shall pay the forfeit, or I'm a liar!"

"Bah! spitz-poodles are to be feared, for their bite is poisonous, but not such mongrel curs like you. Any time you want anything of Noley Nell, you know where to find her."

He did not reply except by a string of frightful curses, as he put spurs to his foaming animal, and dashed down the gulch toward Eureka.

Nell watched him till he had disappeared from view around a bend. Then she turned her own animal, and galloped toward Deadwood Dick's Bonanza, a contracted expression of her brows betraying some anxiety about something.

"He does not mean to give up!" she mused. "Doubtless he can purchase friends with money to help him carry out his plans."

She rode on, and fifteen minutes later stood in the miner's camp in Bonanza Basin. Leone was there, having arrived safely, and Old Avalanche was half-ticked to death over her and young Master Dick. The old man was very fond of children, and he held the little bundle of humanity upon his knee, as proudly as if he were its grandfather.

Leone and Nell were given the hospitalities of the camp. It was a snug, secure little spot here in the basin; it reminded Leone of Flower Pocket, the home of Harry Redburn and Alice, whom Dick had once taken her to visit.

The day passed quickly, and night once more threw her shadows over the land. Leone grew uneasy as darkness approached, for it brought to her a foreboding of danger. And it came.

One of the miners returning from the announcement that a crowd of armed, masked men were swarming into the basin!

CHAPTER XI.

A "SCRIMMAGE"—THE PHANTOM AGAIN.

THE supposition was that Cambre had come with a gang of roughs to make an attack upon the camp, probably with the intention of capturing its supply of previously-mined gold, and Leone or her child.

"Great ham-bone that old Joner gnawed on!" exclaimed the Annihilator, instantly springing to his feet, unmindful of the baby who was reposing in his lap, that youngster being under the painful necessity of taking a tumble to the soft sandy earth. "To arms, boyses! Gather yer spitzbergs, an' perpare fer lively music. Hoo-o-ray! I'm ther very disease w'at desires ter innoculate itself amongst a passel o' ther enemy—ther great roarin' flukin' snow starm o' Norweezy—ther great awe-inspirin' terrific epydemic o' demoralization an' electric annihilation, w'at sweeps thru ther northern lattitudes an' longy-toads like a dose o' powdered fizzie thru an' elephant's constitoochin'!"

The miners gathered in a compact body, and looked to their weapons. The fire was kicked out, and the blackness of the night became more intense. All around lurked a thousand shadows that might easily screen ambushed foes from observation.

The two women were thrust into the single tent, and this was surrounded by half of the men, while the other half, under command of Keno, by Avalanche's orders, withdrew to the further side of the gulch. When the attack should begin, they were to

circle round the basin, to the tunnel entrance, thereby barring the escape of the enemy.

When this arrangement was made to his satisfaction, Avalanche, with Florence, the goat, trotting by his side, crept off to reconnoiter. Not a sound had been given during the last ten minutes, betraying the presence of enemies in the gulch.

They were doubtless waiting for the coming of midnight, or else were creeping up from all sides, meaning to attempt surprise.

Old Avalanche crept along with less noise than a cat would have made, using his eyes sharply, and occasionally pausing to listen, for although his ears were shaven off close to his grizzly old head, his sense of hearing was just as acute as when he possessed these ornamental appendages.

Old as was the Annihilator, he had lost none of his keenness nor wariness upon the trail. Age seemed to sharpen all his powers in this respect, in a great degree.

He crept stealthily along, and not less cautiously followed his companion, the billy goat. The animal seemed endowed with sense and knowledge almost human, sometimes; it had learned the requirements of the prairie and forest trail, and in others of our stories, we have illustrated some of its fighting accomplishments. On more than one occasion had it proven its worth to the satisfaction of its dauntless master.

"Steady, Florence, gal; not much noise as ther skeeter made when he fell down stairs and broke his neck. Keerful, like," the veteran cautioned, as they skulked along. "Ef these ornery skunks don't git salibasted in short meter, ye can call ther Annihilator a condemned fraud. How I'd like ter entwine my old claws in sum ha'r, jest about this percise minit—sh!"

Both stopped stock still, and listened. A dragging sound through the soft sand, warned them that some one was approaching. And it was no doubt an enemy, as friends were not expected, now.

Evidently the comer was also on a reconnoissance, for the sound of his movements betrayed an attempt at stealth.

"Watch out, now, my beloved jint!" whispered the old scout, softly. "an' we'll erupt this varmint's constitoochin' in less time 'a et takes a bumblebeeter sock his stinger inter yer cheek. Just you creep around, an' get in his rear, while I hold ther front in solid shape."

Florence seemed to understand the words, for with a snort of assent he turned abruptly to the left, and made a wide detour through the darkness, in order to get around behind the enemy. Avalanche crouched upon his knees, in the dense gloom, patiently, well knowing that not many moments would elapse ere he would be signalled to attack, or be attacked. And it came sooner than he had expected, and very much differently.

There was presently a loud shrill bleat; a vicious "ba-a-ah!" it was; then like a meteor the form of the goat came plunging through the air. A vain attempt the old scout made to avoid the calamity, but vain it was, for the sledge-hammer head of the animal struck him full in the stomach, and rolled him over and over like a rubber ball.

In the darkness Florence had mistaken his victim, wrongly supposing Avalanche to be the enemy.

It was several minutes ere the old man could command breath sufficient to speak, but when he could, he rolled forth such volumes of oratory to the poor goat as would have astonished a Phillips or even a Webster.

We will not attempt to put it down, for now a wild shout arises from a different portion of the basin, and there is a roar of fire-arms that breaks in upon the stillness of the night.

Forgetting all about the injury done his bread-basket, Avalanche scrambled to his feet, and, rifle in hand, plunged away toward the sound of the conflict, which appeared to be at the camp, or in close proximity to it.

Florence was close at his heels, apparently regretful of his mistake, and bound to be revenged upon the enemy for his deception.

The two circled around, and reached the camp from another side, a few moments later. The firing had ceased, and he found that after a feint of attack the enemy had withdrawn, probably only to prepare for a fiercer and more determined onslaught.

Of their numbers those in the camp had no idea, except that there were swarms of them, all armed with rifles.

"Great ham-bone that fractured the jaw of old Joner!" the old scout exclaimed. "Let 'em cum, ef they wanten encounter a small-sized tornader—a cotchin' disease o' ther pra'ries. I'm ther disease—I an' Florence, my goat, an' Prudence, my mare—we're ther great epyzootic. Lordy, my friends, I jest wish ye knew o' all o' ther terrific exploits we three've bin thru! It'd fill a book bigger'n a dozen Bibles. Sum noted historian once attempted ter interdoose us into the psalm-books, but they thort et waz sacrilegious ter our names."

"I've read o' a pesky old skinkint' by your name, sumwhere," said Keno, winking one eye and engulfing a huge quid of fine-cut. "Praps et waz you."

Just now a rifle report rung out, and one of the miners dropped in his tracks, with a groan. Then came a series of triumphant yells, but no attack. The enemy were maneuvering, and picking off a man whenever opportunity offered.

Thus matters stood at midnight.

Neither the outlaws nor the miners had apparently gained any advantage, for several had fallen on either side, making the loss about even.

The positions were not changed, worth mentioning.

The suspense of waiting was more harrowing to the miners than would have been a pitched battle.

All were men who had fought life and foes with a strong hand—just that sort of men who would at any time rather fight than eat.

But matters could not forever remain thus, and a short time after midnight, an attack was made in earnest, from the north and south side of the basin.

The half of the men under Little Alf Coyle took things coolly, and fought with a desperate precision that told upon the enemy, who wilted rapidly under a deliberate fire.

Nothing as yet had been heard from the men under Keno, although a signal had twice been given for assistance. Their delay appeared unaccountable.

Finally the enemy withdrew again, greatly weakened in numbers, and when they renewed the attack they had consolidated their separated forces into one body, on the south side. Then on they came once more, with evident determination to sweep all before them, without further delay.

Little Alf's men had suffered a loss of over half their number, and the forces now stood four to one, if not more.

But bravely the miners met the onset, striking for life and liberty with a desperation that was in itself heroic. Revolvers were used in the place of rifles, and the conflict became hand-to-hand. Slowly, but surely, the weaker party were driven back toward the northern wall of the basin, and they must have suffered total defeat, only that when all seemed lost, there was a shout of encouragement, and Keno and his men attacked the outlaws in the rear, mowing them down like grain before the reaper.

Unexpectedly, by the ruffians, was this timely aid. They made a feeble attempt at resistance, but in vain. They were shot down without mercy, not a man escaping the death he so richly deserved.

Victory was awarded the brave miners of Deadwood Dick's Bonanza, but at what cost! Out of a gang of thirty men, thirteen had pulled their last trigger. Nor was this all.

During the last attack the defenders had drifted away from the camp, which was left for the time unguarded. As soon as the last shot had been fired, Avalanche and Little Alf hurried toward the tent, where the two girls had been left, but to their horror, found that they were missing.

Ex-Lieutenant Carlos Cambre, was the instigator of the attack upon the Bonanza miners, but he took no part in it. He left all the management to one Jean Jago, a confederate in crime, while he remained just outside the tunnel-entrance, in Eureka gulch. His orders had been to kill off the miners, take possession of the mine, and the two girls, Leone and Noley Nell. As soon as the victory was complete, he was to be thus informed by a messenger, when he would come in and take command.

Outside in the gulch he waited for the messenger to appear, but in vain. Midnight came, with the sounds of the desperate battle; two o'clock, said the hands on his jeweled watch, and the sounds of conflict were hushed in the basin; still no messenger.

"Can it be that the fools have let that handful of dirt-diggers whip them?" he growled, angrily. "It must be so, or I should long ere this have been informed. Curse the luck! I will have to go and see for myself, I expect."

He waited a few minutes longer, and not being rewarded for his patience, he turned into the tunnel and hurried along, swearing in a manner frightful to hear. This was his handiest mode of expressing his rage.

It did not take him long to reach the basin, and he discovered that all was as he surmised. He saw the miners hurrying about with torches, conspicuous among them being Avalanche and his goat. This told him that his men were extinct or had been taken prisoners.

"They are searching for some one or something!" he muttered. "Perhaps it is the two females! Some of my men may have smuggled them off, and are waiting for a chance to escape. In that case they will bring them to head-quarters, so I will get out, lest I be seen, and this crime be thrown upon my good name."

He laughed sarcastically at the idea, and then turned back into the tunnel, and after a brisk walk of a few moments he gained the end opening out into the gulch, and was about to step out, when his gaze became riveted upon an apparition so frightful, that he was rooted to the spot, and a deathly pallor came over his dusky features. That mysterious spirit of the air, the Phantom Miner, stood only a few yards away in all its ghastly weirdness, and surrounded by the unearthly halo of bluish light, which was suggestive of the flames of burning brimstone in purgatory.

Cambre had heard of the Phantom—heard hardy miners tell of encounters with the specter—seen men who claimed to have spent weeks in trying to kill or capture the thing; but he had never before seen it himself, and therefore his terror.

He trembled in every limb, but was powerless to move, and a clammy perspiration broke out upon his face, as he perceived that the ghostly thing was coming nearer and nearer in a slow, gliding motion, one finger of the outstretched hand pointing directly toward him, and the end of that finger shone like a tiny bull's-eye.

Nearer and nearer came the Phantom, until but a few feet only intervened between them; then there was a strange rattling, as of skeleton bones, and a low, unearthly laugh, such as might emanate from such a creature as this. Thoroughly horrified, Cambre stood like a statue, his terror expressed in his glaring, tigerish eyes.

He was no coward; but, rather, was possessed of bull-dog courage. But even that wilted before this thing, be it ghost or devil.

Words came, after a pause, in a low, sepulchral

voice, hardly above a whisper, yet loud enough for the ears of Cambre.

"Man, thou hast burdened thy soul with crime—dyed thy hand deep in the blood of thy fellow-men. Retribution will be thine, God's holy hand shall smite thee. Make what reparation thou canst, while life remains. Give up the papers thou hast stolen unto me, or the fire of vengeance shall shine in the heaven, and a thunderbolt shall plow the earth at thy feet."

The words sent a deeper horror into the heart of Cambre.

He was positive that he was standing in the presence of some supernatural being; he believed the words, and that, unless he obeyed, the penalty would be a sudden and frightful death.

"I have not the papers here. They are locked up in my room, in Eureka!" he gasped, in terror. "Here is the key, or I will bring them to you!"

"Bring them!" returned the Phantom, tersely. "Put them in thy purse, and we will meet again."

Then, to his great horror, the specter began to rise slowly, and he saw it float up into the blackness, and disappear from view.

What great mystery was this?

Were things not earthly coming to populate this earth?

"God forbid that we ever meet again," the terrified villain muttered, as he leaped into the gulch, and sped away.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE KIND OF A MAN I AM!"—RED-HOT'S ADVENTURE AND ENCOUNTER WITH DICK NO. 2.

Not yet was it morning, when Cambre sighted the city, yet all the saloons, stores and gambling-dens were in full blast.

Cambre's terror, owing to his long run, had somewhat abated, by the time he reached the town, though traces of pallor still were visible upon his swarthy visage. He had never before experienced such a fright.

"Curse the thing," he muttered, biting fiercely at his mustache, "how did it come to know that I had possession of the papers? By heaven! I would believe it was no ghost at all, only that I saw it float so mysteriously up toward the sky, with one hand stretched heavenward, as if pointing to its abode. Curses, I say; I'll not surrender those papers—never! Grayford will soon die, then there will be no one to dispute my right to this fortune. Let Deadwood Dick go to the devil!"

"Oh! no; not to the devil yet, my larkie!" cried a sarcastic voice, and a horseman wheeled out of an alley directly in front of the ex-lieutenant, whose words had been spoken loud enough to be heard. "Not to the devil, by any means. The devil wouldn't disgrace his domains by taking in two such villains as you and I, Cambre. Our souls were scorched, long ago. So you were going to let Deadwood Dick go to the devil, eh?"

And there was an ominous click! click of the revolver the road-agent held in his hand.

"Oh! no! no! I did not mean you—I meant the other Deadwood Dick—the real one!"

"Ah! but I am the real one!"

"The devil you say! Then I meant the other one—the counterfeit."

"Boah! That's too transparent now, you accursed rogue. You are playing two trumps in a deck, eh? I've a notion to plug the daylight right out of you!"

And there was a jerk in the speaker's arm, as though he meant to put the threat into execution.

But Cambre put up his hands. "Don't shoot! don't shoot!" he cried, supplicatingly. "I have been faithful to your interests, and tried to capture the brat—"

"Tried? and failed, eh?"

"Yes. I took sixty men—I alone escaped death!"

"You ought to have gone with the rest. Why didn't you steal the brat before the girl got out of town?"

"Because some unknown person warned them, and they fled before I had the opportunity."

"They are all at the Bonanza mines, then, are they?"

"Yes, and it would require an army to dislodge them."

"I care not how many armies it takes. You must steal the brat, and fetch it to me. But, how will I know when you get it? Let me see. There is a post-office in Eureka. You may post a letter informing me that you have the child, and where to meet you. Address it to Slippery Sim."

"Very well. But, I see no way I can possibly get the youngster—"

"Which makes no difference to me. You must get him, or on the twenty-sixth of November you die," Deadwood Dick No. 2 said, grimly. "Remember. But a few days remain in which to accomplish your work."

Then the black horseman turned his animal's head, and rode leisurely away, while Cambre kept on toward the center of the town.

"Curse the luck! matters are pressing all around," he muttered, his dark face growing darker. "If it were not that I hope to make a spec' out of this Grayford business, I'd pull up and clear for another part."

In the meantime, while the two were engaged in conversation, a figure had glided by them and sought the Man-Trap saloon, which was crowded with drunken roughs and miners.

The figure, when revealed under the flaring lamp-light, was that of the boss poker-player from Virginia City, the counterpart of Deadwood Dick, who called himself Red-Hot Harris.

Fearlessly he entered the saloon, and sauntered about, watching those around him with an eagle glance.

A young man managed the shooting in the absence of Noley Nell, and to him the poker-player finally went, seeking amusement. He tried a few shots, and missed the bull's-eye every time; then turned away in disgust.

Martha Cambre saw him, and, when general attention was called to a rough-and-tumble fight in another part of the saloon, she glided to his side.

"What! you here again?" she said, laying her hand upon his arm. "I should not think you would dare."

"Hello! what struck you, miss?" Red-Hot ejaculated, staring at the little figure and pretty face, in evident amazement. "I rather guess you're barkin' up the wrong tree."

"Oh! pshaw! you can't pull coarse wool over my eyes," Martha retorted, with a laugh. "I'm no fool, though I look it."

"Eh? you ain't?" the poker-player said, perplexedly. "Well, by Jove, there's a screw loose somewhere. Who are you?"

"I am Martha Cambre, beer-slinger and detective," the deserted wife of Carlos Cambre replied, a merry twinkle in her eyes. "You are Deadwood Dick!"

The poker-player groaned audibly; then muttered a curse.

"By heaven! again is this confounded brother of mine thrown up in my face. I say, girl, supposing you had a sister who was not as good as she might be. Would you like it if people were to constantly take you for her?"

"No. But you are no brother of this Deadwood Dick. He told me so while here to-night. And now, who are you—Deadwood Dick, or his double? It is a question I must know—and you can answer it."

Harris whistled a few notes from a quaint mountaineer's song, whirled around upon his heel; then stared straight at Martha, quizzically.

"I am Red-Hot Harris," he said, positively. "If any one else knows better who I am than I do, myself, why I'll drop the name, and apply to Congress for a new one."

"You are Deadwood Dick," the little detective persisted, coolly. "Do you know what happened at Bonanza mine to-night?"

"How should I?" with a blank look.

"Well, Carlos Cambre went up there with a band of men to attack the mines, and steal the baby from your wife, Leone!"

Martha looked sharp at the pokerist, just then, expecting some sign of emotion. But the face of a carved statue was never more placid than that of Red-Hot Harris. Not a visible start betrayed that he was in the least interested.

"Carlos Cambre went and Carlos came!" he said, with a smile. "He came alone. Sixty dead and dying, didn't further his aims."

"You speak in riddles. He got whipped, then?"

"Badly!"

"How do you know?"

"It makes no difference."

And the young gentleman turned away, as if the conversation was growing monotonous.

He kept his eye upon one man in the room, and that man was Roxly, the Regulator, who was watching him as the hawk watches its prey. Puzzled was this knight of the Deadwood regulation arena, yet almost positive that the man he wanted was Red-Hot Harris.

Suddenly the eyes of the pokerist gleamed angrily, and he elbowed his way through the crowd, a path clearing immediately when it was seen that he held a pair of six-shooters in his hands.

Straight up to the bar, and onto it leaped the youth, occupying the position he had once upon a previous occasion, though then he held no weapons in hand.

"Gentlemen!" he cried, his voice ringing out clearly, "there is a little matter I wish to settle, here in your presence. When first I came to Eureka, I posted a five hundred dollar reward paper upon these walls, meaning it should stay there. Some meddlesome loafer has insulted me by tearing it down. I want to see that chap, and bust his head—that's the kind of a hairpin I am!"

Not a murmur came from the crowd, as the young bravo was speaking, but when he had finished Old Roxly stepped forward, a grim, puckering expression about his mouth.

"You was it?" Red-Hot exclaimed, a sternness in his glance that forcibly reminded the Regulator of Deadwood Dick. "Well, sir, I am surprised that you, a pretended dabbler in justice, should be guilty of such a dirty mean act. I believe even a hog would hesitate to commit such an insult to the nation."

Roxly laughed, sarcastically.

"Yes, I did it," he replied, with a grin of triumph, "because I knewed it was only intended ter give us fellers ther blind staggers. D'ye want anything o' me, younker?"

"Decidedly, yes. Please make a ring, feller-citizens, and we'll have this bizness through with."

Red-Hot leaped to the floor, and jerked off his jacket, and belt, and laid them on the bar.

"Hello! what d'ye intend to do?" Roxly demanded.

"To fight you, and black both of your eyes, smash your nose, ram your teeth down your throat, polish off your chin, and generally demolish you," replied Red-Hot, grimly. "Come! strip yourself."

"No, I thank you. We'll try other weapons than fists," the Regulator sneered. "I'm no prize-fighter."

"Nor I, but I ain't afraid to try you a whiff. That's the kind of a man I am! If you acknowledge yourself a coward, don't come and see me."

A shout of laughter echoed through the saloon, for even rough and villainous though were most of the crowd, they were the very ones to admire such a dare-devil character as was this Red-Hot Harris.

"Hurra! bully fer ther lad!" yelled Cal Buckskin, enthusiastically. "Don't ye see, geolorious pilgrims?—thar's a leak in Roxly's constitoochin, w'at's let all ther sand run out!"

"Craw-fish!" yelled another.

"He caves!" repeated a third.

"Buildzo him!" came from a fourth, and thus it ran around through the crowd, until growing desperate, the Regulator stepped into the ring, without removing his coat or belt.

"No shamming, now!" warned Red-Hot, as he spat on his hands. "If you try to use any of those implements in your belt, I'll take your life, instead of some of the conceit out of you. One, two, three, now, and here you come, like a full-grown African lion after me!"

Both men sprung forward, and toed the mark, and then began a bout of parrying and thrusting, interesting both to the spectators and the parties concerned.

Roxly, it soon became evident, was no slouch at the business, for he was wary, defensive, and agile as a cat. But he was no match for Red-Hot Harris, the "boss" from Virginia City, which soon became assured from the battered appearance of his enemy's countenance. Both of Roxly's eyes were soon nearly swollen shut, and his nose mashed out of shape. But he grew desperate the more he was punished, and sprung forward to clinch in a death-hug.

Foolish was this attempt, however, for Red-Hot coolly rained a shower of blows down into his battered face, which staggered him back. Still he was undaunted, and rushed forward, but a terrible blow from Harris's clenched white fist, hurled him back against the bar, in a heap.

With a curse he drew a revolver, and despite the fact that he had been warned that such an action would be his death-warrant, he sent a bullet, well-aimed, toward the pokerist's heart.

A cry of indignation came from the crowd, at this juncture.

But Red-Hot only laughed contemptuously, and placed his hand upon his heart.

"My heart is too hard for such leaden pellets to penetrate, gentlemen; and as for you, you coward," turning to Roxly, who had regained his feet, "your life shall pay the forfeit."

He leaped upon the Regulator, and bore him to the floor, and in another moment the revolver was pressed to the temple, and there came a report. Wounded was Roxly, but not dead!

Then Red-Hot sprung to his feet, and swung the still smoking weapon above his head.

"Does any man want to say I didn't do it fair?" he cried, his eyes blazing. "Speak out, and I'll show ye the kind of a man I am!"

A cheer rent the air.

"Hurra! ther boy did it fair—jes' 's fair as any man ken do!" came the response from a dozen lungs. "Hurra fer Red-Hot!"

A general good-will toward the young pokerist seemed manifest, and drinks were ordered all around.

Harris did not imbibe, but donning his jacket and belt, betook himself from the saloon into the gulch.

It was just then the darkest hour before the dawn of the coming day. It was intensely black.

Very few were now abroad; one horseman was riding leisurely through the gulch, and at him Red-Hot gave only a casual glance as he hurried toward the Bonanza mines, or in the direction in which they were located. His mind was too busied with other thoughts to notice that he was followed, and that, too, by the lone horseman.

He was not aware of the fact until he saw a noose settle over him, and draw taut above his waist, pinioning his arms to his side, and jerking him to the ground.

The next moment he felt a revolver-muzzle pressed to his temple, and a full-masked face bending over him.

"H! ha!" cried a voice, evidently a disguised one, "so this is my man, is it? Good-morning, Deadwood Dick Number one! Sorry to see you in such a plight, but there was no other way to get at you. Allow me to introduce myself—your double, Deadwood Dick Number two!"

A curse escaped Red-Hot's lips.

"What means this foolery?" he demanded, angrily.

"It means," replied Number 2, with a chuckle, "that you are my prisoner. I have been awaiting the opportunity to capture you for a long while."

CHAPTER XIII.

RED-HOT IN DURENCE—A BOLD PLAN.

THE announcement caused a flame of deeper anger to flush the cheek of Red-Hot Harris. He saw that he was wholly in the power of this Deadwood Dick No. 2, whoever he might be, for aside from his hands being pinioned to his sides by the lariat, the cocked revolver stared him threateningly in the face.

He was no coward, but he saw that for the present attempted resistance would be worse than useless—would insure his speedy death.

"Yes, you are my prisoner," No. 2 repeated, triumphantly. "You do not know me now, but you will ere long, and will be astonished. I have a cave in the mountains, and there we will go. Perhaps you may remain there some time; so if there is anything you would have done here below, first, name it and I will attend to it, to the best of my ability, for you."

"No, thank you. I am not a business man, and therefore not incumbered with cares that devolve upon such," Red-Hot replied. "But, see here; if you hold me a prisoner with the idea that you are holding Deadwood Dick, you are greatly in error. Deadwood Dick, the road-agent, perished nearly a

month ago. So you see that you are not holding on to the trump card, as you imagine."

"The devil!" No. 2 ejaculated; "but I do not believe this trash. I have a test at my retreat, that will bring out the truth of the matter. Come; rise to your feet, and march along before me. No funny business, now, or I'll put you out of your misery, in style!"

"Well, I suppose there is no help for it," Harris growled, rising to his feet. "Whither away, you cuss?"

"Straight ahead, up the gulch. Turn only on order, and attempt to draw no weapon, and all will be right. Forward!"

Red-Hot stalked off, biting savagely at his lip, while No. 2 followed closely behind, keeping hold of the lasso with one hand, and grasping his revolver in the other. Bound was he that the boss poker-player should not escape him, if vigilance could prevent it.

The march was a long and tiresome one. They left the gulch a mile above the Bonanza mine, striking a defile much narrower and more tortuous, which led upward into the mountains. All around were steep beetling crags, yawning chasms and dizzy declivities; and over the mountain a dense pine forest cast its shadows.

Day dawned, and tinged the peaks rosy red; still the tramp continued, nor did it end until noon, when they entered a mountain cave, far above the level of the western plains.

There was only one apartment to it, and this was rudely furnished with rough stools, a table, and several piles of skins, showing that it had some day been tenanted by a hunter or trapper. Indeed, one of this species of individuals sat before the fire now, engaged in roasting some bits of venison—a tough, bleak-eyed, villainous-looking man, of five-and-forty, in whose face the word "cutthroat" was plainly written.

"Here we are, at last!" the bogus Deadwood Dick cried, as they entered the cave. "Wake up, Corkus, and disarm this fellow, and bind him. He is the bird I have been planning to entrap."

"Eh! ish dot der poy?" Corkus replied, coming forward and scrutinizing Red-Hot, critically. "Vas dot Deadwood Dick?"

"The same notorious reprobate!" No. 2 laughed, tauntingly. "The amiable gentleman I have been trying to counterfeit."

"You're a liar!" replied Red-Hot, as hotly as his name might have implied, "and if you'll give me my freedom, I can lick thunder out of both of you in less time than it takes to say Eureka! I polished off one conceited lark last night, and ain't afraid to try you a whirl."

"No, I thank you!" No. 2 replied, with a sarcastic smile. "I am not risking any thing when matters in my hands are sure. I'll soon show you that I let things mature before I strike."

Corkus deprived Red-Hot of all the weapons on his person, and pushed him away into a corner where there were plenty of skins to lie upon.

This done, he and No. 2 retired to the portion of the cave where the fire was burning, leaving the unlucky poker-player to his reflections.

In the Bonanza mine great excitement prevailed, on the discovery that Leone and her babe, and Neil Brandon, were missing from the tent. Only two surmises could be made concerning their absence—either they had become frightened and fled in terror to get out of the path of the flying bullets, or else they had been captured by some of the ruffians, and spirited away. This seemed the more probable, and search was immediately made in the basin, which resulted in the discovery by Little Alf and Avalanche, of Nelly Brandon, lying insensible, not far from the camp. An ugly cut upon her forehead, over the temple, had evidently caused her unconsciousness.

"Great ham-bone that paralyzed the larynx uv old Joner!" the Annihilator ejaculated, picking the slender form from the ground, and bearing it tenderly toward camp. "This settles their question, as their oyster shell sed w'en it went down ther Irishman's throat. Mrs. Leone an' ther piccaninny has encountered a condemned snow-storm o' deefikity, an' bin wafled away on sum boreal breeze."

"Et looks kinder that way," replied Alf, dubiously. "Mebbe thes gal ken give us an ljee on ther subject, as soon as she returns from thet."

"Distant hemisphere
From which no man returneth."

"Ef the leetle woman's run off with, here's what's goin' ter search for her."

"Hayr, too, I'm tellin' ye!" replied Avalanche. "Deadwood Dick shen't never say thet ther cavortin' old devastatin' disease o' these lattitudes, didn't act levil w't him an' his'n. Why, thet deserted wife o' his'n is sweeter than all ther molasses an' shugger in ther hull world! Never see'd only one sweeter female, an' thet was Wild Edna. She was actooally so sweet that the honey on her lips would form into shugger crusts, and she'd trade ef for balls an' powder, at ther fort."

Water was dashed into Nelly's face, and her hands gently chafed, but it was some time ere she recovered consciousness sufficiently to tell what had occurred. She seemed dazed and bewildered, but a swallow of liquor from Keno's flask seemed to right her memory, and she glanced around her with a shudder.

"Are they gone?" she gasped.

"Bet yer life—gone whar ther whang-doodle twined an' the woodbine—"

"There!" don't quote enny more rimes, please!" growled Avalanche, in disgust, "especially, if you ken't do it scientific. Thar war my brother, Josiah—durnedest coon fer poetry ye ever see'd. Red him

arrested, once, out in Mishigan, fer drivin' ther editor uv a political paper crazy w' campaign poetry. Anuther time, he prevented an Injun attack at Laramie, by ridin' out an' readin' an everlastin' strin' o' poetry about the muses, to the Injuns. Eh? miss; no, thar ain't a live outlaw present, 'cept w'at's layin' around dead. Whar's Mrs. Leone?"

"Oh! she's gone! she's gone!" Nelly cried, bursting into tears. "We ran out of the tent to escape the danger of being cut down by the bullets, and two men saw and followed us. One man snatched the babe from her arms, and fled. She ran screaming in pursuit, and I would have followed her, only that the other man struck me, and I knew no more."

"Then, thar's bizness fer ther great firm o' Avalanche, Goat and Mare, hullsalse Injun Annihilators!" declared the old man, fiercely. "We three ken find that innocent baby ef enny mortal can. When all ther masheenery o' ther achievements gits inter motion, I tell ye there's bound ter be a rupture sum'war erlong ther ecraiter."

"Oh! sir, I fear you cannot find her," sobbed Nelly, piteously. "Those men may have dragged her away and murdered her. I believe it was Carlos Cambre's intention to do so."

"Wall, we'll hope fer ther best," the Annihilator said, soberly. "We'll wait till daylight, and then endeavor to start up a trail."

The rest of the miners now came flocking irregularly into camp, with the report that there was no one alive within the basin except themselves, nor any signs of the missing Leone and her child.

Which forced the conclusion that she had been borne off by the two ruffians, to imprisonment or death.

Under the cover of darkness graves were dug, and the dead outlaws and miners were consigned to their last resting-places.

After this duty was performed, the miners all gathered around the camp-fire, and waited for daylight—sleep was not thought of after the excitement that night.

Morning came, at last, with a cold, drizzly November rain, which in this region is about all the winter that the inhabitants experience.

After the morning meal Avalanche saddled Prudence Cordelia, and prepared for his departure. Noisy Nell having concluded to go back to her post in the Man-Trap, was comfortably mounted upon the old mare, the Annihilator having volunteered to give her passage as far as Eureka, where he and Little Alf proposed to go first, having left the mine in Keno's charge.

Cathie, the discarded wife of Fordyce Grayford, was very much discouraged after she found that she was powerless to do anything on account of the theft of her proof-papers. With Bolton, her lawyer, she still retained apartments at the Flag of Truce, hardly knowing what she was waiting for, now that her hopes and intentions had all been dashed by the treachery of Cambre.

Still, she was a persevering woman, and was determined not to give up while a chance remained.

Bolton had met her in San Francisco, and becoming interested in her case, had volunteered to help her prosecute it, he having been promised a liberal fee, should she succeed in obtaining her rights.

They had first gone East, and procured such evidence as they were able, after which they had tracked Grayford to Deadwood, and then to Eureka.

Cathie's only hope was in the discovery of a lost son. If she could find and enlist him in her cause, he could, on Grayford's death, claim every cent's worth of the property.

But this lost son was not so easily found. He, too, had been traced to Deadwood, but on their arrival there, they found that he had lately emigrated to parts unknown.

The day after the battle at Deadwood Dick's Bonanza, Bolton rushed into Cathie's room, pell-mell, like some overjoyed schoolboy.

"Good news, so cheer up!" he cried, dropping his beaver, and seating himself, with a business-like cross of the lower extremities. "Deadwood Dick, or Ned Harris, is here in Eureka!"

Cathie looked up, a hopeful, anxious expression upon her face.

"Really, truly?" she demanded, as if she doubted the fact. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I am sure. There are evidently two Deadwood Dicks, according to all report, and then there is another fellow, who calls himself Red-Hot Harris, who looks as much like your notorious son as your self, and you very much resemble him."

"Yes, but which of these three is my son?"

"Ah! that's the stick. No one seems to know which is genuine. But I shall keep watch, and endeavor to find out."

"I have a little more hope, then. But, did you hear from Fordyce?"

"Yes. He is no better. The man in attendance, who pretends to have an extended knowledge of surgery, says that he cannot live the week out. His wounds and old age cannot but use him up."

"Poor man," Cathie said, wiping away the tears that had risen to her eyes. "But that he would curse me, I would go to him. Ah! that we had never parted! But he was so miserably and cruel, that I believed life with him would be an endless torture."

"It will be necessary," the attorney said, gravely, "for you to go and see him before he dies. Perhaps he might be willing to conciliate. I will keep informed of his condition, and take you at the right time. In the meantime, I have work on hand. This Carlos Cambre, it appears, has a wife living here in Eureka, who is in the detective business, having put the harness on her own back, when her father died.

She accosted me to-day, and we had a long talk. She knows all about our business here, and Cambre's theft of the documents, which keep us from working. We are going to attempt to break into his room to-night, and steal them."

"Oh! God grant that you may be successful, sir," the lady muttered, as Bolton took his hat and arose to depart.

"If nothing happens we shall get them, unless he happens to have them concealed on his person, which we doubt," he said, retiring with a bow.

That evening about the hour Cambre was supposed to be at supper, Bolton met Martha near the Man-Trap saloon, and they hurried away.

Cambre had rooms in a lodging-house at the further side of the village, and got his meals at a restaurant some distance from his rooms, so that the plan of the two promised to be successful, if they could only find the villain out. When in sight of the lodging-house, Martha left Bolton, and went to see if the ex-lieutenant was at a neighboring restaurant, where she hoped to find him.

She soon returned to the attorney with the announcement that he was there, drinking with a half dozen of Deadwood Dick's old band, who had just arrived on the evening stage.

"Now, come on, and the papers are ours!" she said. "I have a duplicate key of the room, filed to fit from an impression. Get your revolvers in readiness, and follow me."

They hurried up the street, and entered the building, ascending a pair of stairs to the second floor. It was a general lodging-house, and no one of the two or three persons encountered noticed them.

Martha led the way to Cambre's room, and for precaution, knocked upon the door; and there was a halloo from within!

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ASTONISHING DISCOVERY—THE GIRL ROAD-AGENT.

RED-HOT HARRIS was left lying in one corner of the cave, and was not again molested during the day. Corkus brought him a slice of venison and a cup of water, at dark upon which to appease his appetite, which had been keenly aroused by his long tramp.

A short while after, Deadwood Dick No. 2 came, and seated himself near the prisoner, as if for a talk. He was still attired in the jetty suit of buck-skin, with gloves, hat and mask to match, which made him such a clever imitation of the genuine Ned Harris.

"Well?" Red-Hot interrogated, angrily, managing to raise himself upon his elbow, "what do you want?"

"What?" the other replied, coolly, watching the so-styled poker-player with a strange, intense gaze—"what? Well, I got tired of talking to old Corkus, and thought I'd come and let you amuse me. I am sometimes weary of the old wretch's stories."

"Well, I am sorry to say you've clumb the wrong tree, for amusement!" Red-Hot replied. "I am not in much of a mood for conversation."

"Oh! you ain't? But I reckon you will become interested, by and by. Do you know what I have brought you here for, sir?"

"No; I am sorry to say that I hav'n't the slightest idea, sir road-agent."

"Well, then, I will tell you. Deadwood Dick, when you left your wife, and came here, I found your wife was about to follow; so I came also. My heart was filled with bitterness, which gradually dissipated into resolve. I have lately found that she is the mother of a child—yours as well as hers; and this discovery caused a definite plan of attack against you. Ned Harris, you will find that you have one to deal with, who will fight out this duel—yes, exterminate everything in my path that is human, to attain my object."

"Humph!" Red-Hot drawled, coolly. "I really do wish, if you must talk, that you would say something more interesting to me. I don't care nothing about your quarrel with this notorious Deadwood Dick, nor your contemplated revenge. If you know any new points about poker or keno, I shall be pleased to hear from you."

No. 2 evidently would have been relieved if he could have given vent to a round oath; but for some reason he withheld it. The cool indifference of this boss poker-player, was extremely provoking, and conducive to feelings of an unpleasant nature.

"Hang the poker," he growled. "What I want is for you to acknowledge that you are Deadwood Dick, and then I will surprise you."

"You'll wait till your teeth decay, I'm thinkin', before I shall acknowledge anything of the kind!" retorted Red-Hot. "Did I not tell you that Deadwood Dick is dead?"

"Yes; but you lied."

"Did I? No, I think not. Deadwood Dick is dead; Edward Harris lives!"

"Ah! I see," No. 2 said, comprehendingly; "and you are Edward Harris."

"I am!" was the reply.

"Then why this attempt at deception—this Red-Hot business?"

"The name was suggested by hearing a fellow call me a red-hot customer to deal with. When I left the Hills, I dropped the name of Deadwood Dick—buried it as we bury the dead, intending never to use it again. But I find that to be an impossibility. I came here as Harris, and they recognized me, and I braved them down. Then I shaved off the hair that had grown upon my face, and reappeared as Red-Hot Harris. The character, by considerable 'cheeking' and 'brass,' was partially successful. I guess the Eurekaites are convinced that I am Red-Hot Harris!"

"Probably. I knew you were Deadwood Dick—the eyes of love are harder to deceive than those of uninterested curiosity-seekers."

Harris started, and gazed keenly at the speaker, a wrinkle disfiguring the placidity of his forehead. "What do you mean?" he demanded, suspiciously. "By heaven! can it be you, Leone, in disguise?" There was a bitter little laugh of sarcasm; then the answer:

"No, not Leone; she would have more leniency on you than I shall have. Wait a moment, and you shall see whom you have to expect mercy from."

Saying which, No. 2 arose and glided away into the darkness of the cave. It was some ten minutes later when a slight, girlish figure reappeared and stood before the ex-road-agent; and he started violently, and uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"My God! is that you, *Edith Stone*?"

"Yes, it is I, Ned Harris—the girl who loved and still worships you—the girl who has schemed for many long days, and now has you in her power. Dick" and the beautiful girl-woman came closer. "you are mine now, forever. In this mountain cave you must spend the rest of your days with me."

"My heaven! I thought you were dead—drowned in the Little Madras, girl!" Deadwood Dick replied, gazing at her, wonderingly. "But, instead, I see you before me, as foolishly and hopelessly blind as you were before."

"No, not hopelessly, Dick. You are mine, now, beyond all other claim—mine, forever. I don't suppose you will become reconciled to your lot, for a while, but I can bring you to your oats, as the expression goes. If love and feminine persuasion won't do it, force will!"

"Ah! you are combining force with infatuation, eh?" Dick said, slowly. "You seem to be considerably below what I'd estimated you to be. What force could you use, that you for one moment imagine would make Deadwood Dick yield—give up his honor, his manhood, to lead a doubtful life with you?"

"It need not be doubtful; you could take me East and marry me. As to the force, I shall soon come into possession of your infant son. You shall then swear, by all you hold sacred, that you will marry me, or Corkus shall cut the brat's throat from ear to ear, right in your presence. How like you the picture, Ned Harris?"

"I cannot say that I particularly admire it!" Dick replied, in his grim way. "Neither do I believe I have any cause to fear in that direction."

"Why not?"

"Because you would not have done such an infamous act as that. Besides, you have not got the child yet, and are not likely to get it."

"Don't be surprised if I have it in my possession before to-morrow, this time. As to the other part, the brat shall die, if you remain obstinate, and your red-headed wife shall follow suit. Don't imagine I fear to do this, or anything else. A desperate woman is sometimes worse than a desperate man. I am desperate, and determined that you shall be mine, no matter at what cost. I gave up my father, friends and a grand home and luxurious life, all for you, and do you imagine I will let anything balk my designs? No! I would kill you, even, before I would relinquish you to that other girl. Irretrievably you are mine."

Dick did not reply. He saw that she was terribly in earnest, and he wondered how he was to find extrication from this dilemma, which involved not only himself, but his darling Leone, whom he now loved tenfold more than ever before.

Old Avalanche and Little Alf conducted Noisy Nell to Eureka, and set her down in front of the Man-Trap.

Then they stabled Prudence Cordelia, and with the eccentric goat following at their heels, wandered about town, using their eyes and ears, and instigating inquiries after Leone.

But they were not successful. Nothing had been seen of her, and they finally arrived at the conclusion that she had not come back to town.

"Great ham-bone! that choked old Joner," the Annihilator at last grunted, when they gave up the search. "That great snow-flake 's struck a snag an' collapsed. I reckon. I can't see which way that boreal breeze kin advantageously waft now."

"Nor I," replied Coyle. "But I'm pretty well satisfied the woman never cum here, or else she could be found."

"Great ham-bone! I s'pose you're right; an' yet I orfully hate ter give up ter the noshun thet she's becom crow fodder!"

"Oh! no fear fer that. She's plucky, an' got grit enuff fer sixty common gals. Eh? Avalanche?"

"Wal, I ruminate she hes. But speakin' o' spunk an' grit, ye jes' enter see'd a gal yer 'umble sarvent onc' went ter court, wi' sum intentions ter ask her ter shoulder part o' ther epydemic's harness fer lifetime. She war a Hoosier gal, an' great scriptural ham-bone thet killed Joner! sech a temper as she hed! Ef I didn't pony up a couple o' pounds o' candy an' nuts, an' a flask o' 'mountain-dew,' every time I entered her presence, she'd fairly spit fire, an' her eyes 'd emit sparks o' flame ther size us a pea. One o' these sparks popped out onc' ter, and set ther house afire, but the opportune presence of yours truly prevented disaster. Spunky? Guess so. When she got roarin' mad she'd—"

"Sh! steady! d'ye see them two fellers a-comin' down ther gulch?" Little Alf said, pointing out from the crowd two men who were coming into the town from the direction of the Big Bonanza. "D'ye see 'em?"

"Yes—two rough-looking pilgrims, evidently miners—one wi' a bag o' sumthin' slung behind his back."

"Karect! an' don't et enter yer organ o' phrenology, thet thar mought be sumthin' in thet bag as

would suit our fastidious tastes?" was the query, and the young scout watched the approaching men narrowly.

"Jaws o' ther whale thet masticated old Joner! ye're a sharp 'un, boyee. Mebbe thet very same bag contains an infant prodigal or whatever you call it. 'Twon't do ter let them men go unobserved, that is sartin."

"O' course not. We'll let 'em slide by, an' then we'll foller," Coyle said.

The two men drew back behind a clump of bushes, and allowed the two miners to pass, which they did. Both were large, burly-looking fellows, evil of countenance, and huge of muscle. Neither looked too good for the commission of almost any crime.

"They're genuine 'toughs' of the blood and butcher-knife order," Coyle muttered, as they tramped by.

"Yas, reg'lar old cavortin', buckin' hyenas!" assented the Annihilator, with a grunt. "Cusses ther lick wi' brute force, but no mre'n a bundle o' chips ef ye git ther drop on 'em, or work skintificially. Ef 'tain't Deadwood Dick's offspring they've got in thar; et's sumthin' they're mighty keerful uv. See what a grip thet coon hes got onter ther bag."

"Yes, thet kid's in thar, no doubt. Come, let us saunter along and see what they go to. Sech game ain't picked up every day. Keep ther goat behind, or ther de'il will be to pay."

"Not much, I don't," the Annihilator replied, grimly. "Whar waffeth this boreal breeze o' destruction, waffeth onc' or more o' ets peccoliar j'int. Leave Florence Night-in-a-gale? No, sree! I'm telling you."

"Ah! right; cum along then or they'll—by thunder they've escaped us, now. Where are they?"

While they were speaking the two "toughs" had mingled in with the crowd that swarmed in the gulch, and were lost from view. Cursing their own stupidity both Coyle and Avalanche sprung forward and elbowed their way along in pursuit, but all in vain.

Their most careful efforts failed to discover the pair of villains, or where they had gone to. Like shadows they had vanished. It was a bitter disappointment to our two friends, who had calculated upon an easy victory.

"We're dashed again," Coyle said, hopelessly.

"We may's well hang up the fiddle and the bow."

"Great ham-bone, no! We'll not give up, yet. Thar's thet Careless Cambre; the babe will doubtless be delivered inter his hands. It tharfore behooves us ter keep our optical masheenery glued onter him."

They wandered about aimlessly during the day—not really aimlessly, for they were constantly looking for Cambre, whom Avalanche had once seen, and thought he should be able to recognize again.

Little Alf was a good poker-player, and so they went into the Man-Trap saloon and amused themselves for a while. Noisy Nell came around to their table shortly, perhaps because she was very favorably impressed with the looks and apparent worth of Coyle.

And his good opinion of her was not lessened by the fact that she occupied so undesirable a position within one of the worst haunts in Eureka. He saw that she was modest when modesty was called for, and brave and fearless when the case demanded; and to say the little scout admired her, would be only drawing it mild.

He was not a bad-looking fellow himself, twenty-five summers in this wayward world having dealt with him kindly.

"Hev ye seen anything o' Careless Cucumber?" Avalanche demanded, as she came up.

"No. He has not been in here since I came," the girl replied, glancing searchingly around her. "Have you found any tidings of Mrs. Harris?"

"Nary a tidin', my gal. Saw a couple o' 'toughs'—one kerried a bag on his back in which a baby might have been concealed—but they flung us."

"Those same men came in here and lubricated," Nell announced, "and then went out again."

"The deuce they did! An' did one tote a bag o' sumthin' on his nigh shoulder, w'ich mought 'a' bin a baby or a condensed 'arthquake'?"

"Yes!"

"Which way 'd they go?"

"I cannot tell. I did not watch them; only noticed them by chance."

Avalanche and Little Alf rose to their feet simultaneously.

"We may trap 'em by visitin' the different saloons," Coyle said.

"Just my tice, peractly," the old man assented. "For a'd, march—you take the lead—the dirt allus goes before the broom."

Thank you," Alf smiled, bowing to Nelly, and leading the way toward the door. "A slouch sometimes follows the broom, also."

They went out, and made a round of all the saloons, without result, until they were issuing from the last one, when they came face to face with Carlos Cambre.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PAPERS—EYES MIGHTIER SOMETIMES THAN THE SWORD.

MARTHA CAMBRE and Lawyer Bolton shrunk back in alarm as a voice from within the room responded to the little woman's knock. A shrill halloo, it was; in a woman's voice, evidently; but it told the two counterplotters that their coast was not clear as they had anticipated.

"What shall we do? This is a deuce of a scrape to be caught in," the disciple of Blackstone gasped, clutching Martha by the arm. "Our game is balked; let us escape."

"You can go, if you want to," Martha replied,

calmly. "I ain't quite so far gone as to back out now;" and as if to carry out her assertion, she took a little shining revolver from among the folds of her dress.

"Halloa! w'at the debbil you's want?" came again from the inside. "I cum along out dar, putty soon, an' mop de floor wid you sassy brats."

"Ah! that is explanation," Martha said, in a whisper. "There is some negress inside, evidently caring for the room—making the bed and dusting. Come on."

She glided forward and opened the door, which, as she had surmised, was unlocked. Another moment and she and Bolton were inside the room, with the door locked behind them.

An old negress, with a face as black as coal, and hair white and woolly, was engaged in sweeping the room, and putting things to order. But she stopped stock still, rooted to the floor with horror, when she beheld the intruders, and the pair of revolvers the worthy attorney and counselor-at-law held leveled toward her.

"Oh! de Lordy sakes alive! Oh! goodness gracious!" she gasped, sinking back upon the floor, with a jar heavy enough to convey the idea that she was a small-sized earthquake. "Don't shoot, marster—don't hurt a poor ole woman w'at can't help herself. I be's innocent—deed I is, for shuah!"

"Yes, you're an innocent old idiot, sure enough," Bolton replied. "Just you keep quiet, and we'll not scalp nor roast you, I'll guarantee. But if you appeal for assistance, I'll make perforated card-board out o' you. Go on, miss, and see if you can discover the papers."

"You had better stand near the door—with your back against it!" Martha replied. "My villainous husband may be along at any moment, and it would be dangerous for him to discover us in his room. I will turn things topsy-turvy to find the papers."

She was as good as her word in this respect. She set to work, first, and went through the contents of a large old fashioned desk; then a bureau and washstand, but without satisfactory result. The carpet was then ripped up, and every conceivable place minutely examined, where the lost documents could possibly have been concealed. But they were not found, much to the two counterplotters' disappointment.

"I think there is a secret compartment in this old desk," Martha said at last, pausing before the structure of walnut, which was an oddity in the way of curious pigeon-holes and drawers. "But I do not know how to find it. Is there anybody in the room below or in those adjoining, old woman?"

"No, missus. Dar's berry few in de buildin', at this hour."

"Good. Let me out, Mr. Bolton, and I will go down and procure an ax with which to knock this old shell apart."

Bolton obeyed by unlocking the door, and letting her out into the passage. With an injunction to fly for safety if Cambre should put in an appearance, she hurried away on her errand.

She was not gone long, however, soon returning with a heavy ore bar as a substitute for the ax which she could not find.

"Now, if Carlos will only stay away for a little while, we will have a chance to learn if the papers are here," she said.

"Yes, it will take but a short time to find out," Bolton answered.

"At least if we cannot find the papers, we can wait here for him to come, and force him to give them up to us."

"Ah! but I am afraid we should have our hands full, there. Such villains as he, combining the characteristics of the stubborn bull-dog and the cunning wary fox, would be a hard customer to force."

At his request she surrendered the bar to him, while she took his revolvers, and stood guard at the door.

He then attacked the old desk with a will, and soon had it lying apart in different sections, without creating any great noise.

Sure enough a secret drawer was discovered, in which were a package of papers, tied in an oil-silk wrapper. There was also a quantity of money, which, no doubt, also belonged to Cambre. This was all.

"The papers! the papers!" Bolton cried, leaping forward and seizing them in his grasp. "Victory is ours, at last."

"Don't be too sure. My father always taught me never to hope until I was sure I had something to hope for, sir," Martha said, coming forward.

Bolton tore off the wrapper, and hastily glanced them over.

"They are here," he said, exultantly—the genuine ones, and the copies Cambre drew from them!"

Avalanche and Alf, Coyle uttered not a word as they faced Cambre in front of the saloon, but pushed by him as if they did not recognize him—which the scout, Little Alf did not, never having seen him, before. But Cambre recognized the Annihilator by the goatee; and, too, he recognized him as the same individual who had once knocked him down in front of Deadwood Dick's cell.

"Hello!" he cried, following up, and slapping the old man on the shoulder, heavily. "Hold up, old rackabones, if ye don't wanten git plugged. I recognize you."

"Oh! you do!" Avalanche said, turning around, with a 'six' in his grasp full cocked and ready for use. "Ye recognize ther great equatorial pestilence, do ye?—ther great destructive epydemic o' ther peraries—the Norweejan snow-flake o' boreal Annihilation? Wal, thet ain't nothin' singlyer, since I recky you. Guess thar's a picture rubbin' itself ag'in' your visage, ain't thar, o' how beauchiful I laid you

out, not more'n a month ago? Ham-bone thet prepared ther obituary uv old Joner! I 'spect ye wanter see your uncle on thet score, eh?"

"Oh! no!" Cambre replied, smiling graciously, as he saw the Annihilator had the drop on him. "I just chanced to recognize you, and wanted to ask you if you had seen Deadwood Dick, lately?"

"Nixy; hain't seen ther lad since the day we arriv' in Eureka. But, ef ye wanter fight, et's all right. Hayr's what kin accomodate ye."

"Oh, no, thanks; my inclinations don't run in that channel," the ex-lieutenant replied, turning away.

"Now, then, boyee, we've gotter keep our orbs on him!" Avalanche whispered to Coyle. "I bet he gits the baby afore midnight, unless we intercept it, w'ich we must try to do."

"Yes, the papers are all here," Bolton repeated, counting them over—"the marriage certificate, the birth certificate of Cathie's child, and others of minor or greater importance."

"I am truly grateful to God for this success," Martha said, reverently; "but come, let us hasten from this place, before my husband returns, or he will kill us. Ha! the negress has escaped—how negligent of me!"

True enough, while Martha's back had been turned, the wench had glided to the door, softly unlocked it, and made her escape.

"Curse the black-and-tan," Bolton exclaimed, angrily. "It will not do for us to try and escape—"

"Very truly spoken!" interrupted a cool, sarcastic voice, and Carlos Cambre's commanding form stood in the doorway, accusingly. "It will not do for you to try to escape with those papers in your possession. Drop them, and you can depart in peace."

"I'd drop you, if I had the 'drop' on you!" the attorney growled.

At this juncture Cambre's gaze rested for the first on Martha. He reeled back with a frightful curse, as if he had been dealt a heavy blow, as he beheld her piercing glance leveled at him, sternly.

"Martha! here!" he gasped, his face growing first white, and then flushed.

"Yes, Martha is here!" the deserted wife replied, scornfully; but in the second of Cambre's surprise, he had lowered his aim, and she quickly took advantage of this opportunity to cover him with her revolvers—"here, but not to claim you for a husband. You are a dastardly wretch, even below my contempt. Step aside and let us pass. No; go down ahead of us, or I'll blow your brains out!"

He growled not unlike some fierce wild beast when he saw where he had failed, in allowing them to gain a point.

"I won't go!" he declared, stubbornly.

"You will!" Martha assured, triumphantly, and back came her revolver hammers, click! click! to full-cock. "One! two—"

Cambre uttered a fierce curse, and leaping along the passage to the head of the stairs, made a mighty spring. A flash from Martha's revolver followed him; then they ran forward and found him lying on the landing below, with his right arm broken, and a bullet wound in his leg. But he clutched a pistol in his left hand, and there was a gleam of desperation in his eye, that forebode evil.

"Halt where you are!" he cried, leveling the weapon, "or I'll fire as long as there's a cartridge left, if it costs my life."

"Come!" Martha said, pulling Bolton back. "We will be tempting death in trying to pass him. We can better escape from a window."

They hurried back into Cambre's room, locked the door behind them, and found that the one window, over whose surface cobwebs had been allowed to collect, was neither shuttered nor barred. The sash was easily taken out; and several bed-quilts twisted and knotted together furnished a mode of escape to the ground, so that in a few minutes the two were on the soil below, and hurrying away through the night's gloom.

"Now to the Flag of Truce to apprise Cathie of our good luck," Bolton said, as they hurried along. "It will be cheer to the poor woman."

"Well, I hope so," Martha replied. "I must return to the Man-Trap, to resume my duties there. If you should be in need of my further services, do not hesitate to call upon me."

"Certainly not," he replied.

They walked along until in front of the Flag of Truce, and there separated.

It was a painful subject to think upon for Deadwood Dick—this puzzle of how he was going to escape from the cave, and prevent the terrible tragedy Edith Stone had outlined.

He was helpless in his bonds, which were of thongs of buck-skin, and from which he saw no way of extricating himself. All his weapons had been taken from him, and he was wholly in the power of this desperate young woman—this girl whose love for him had utterly made her mad on the subject; for from the bottom of his heart, Dick believed she was insane. He could not think otherwise, when he remembered her as the gentle, winning girl he had most unfortunately become acquainted with in the Black Hills. Then, no one would have suspected that the temper of a fury was possible to her, she seemed so sweetly innocent and confiding; now how she was changed! Rough and passionate, with a tendency to evil, she must be insane; indeed, it would be rather a consoling reflection that she was, Dick thought, rather than that she was in the full possession of her faculties.

But he was aware that in either case she would do as she had promised—she was desperately in earnest.

He laid a long while after she left him, turning the subject over in his mind.

The darkness in the cave was intense, the little fire on the opposite side illuminating a radius of only a few feet. He could see nothing of Edith or her tool, the man Corkus, and concluded that they had turned in for the night.

"Now would be my time for escape, if ever," the prisoner muttered, rolling off his bed of skins to the hard, rocky floor. "Ah! that I were only out of this! There is a land in this great wide West where I could settle down in quiet, without much fear of being molested on account of the bitter past. With my boy, I could weary through a life that thus far has presented a hundred-fold more of bitterness than pleasure. Leone! Ah! why do thoughts of her constantly arise before my eyes—why do they haunt me? Have not I parted from her forever? Can it be forever? I sometimes think not. As God is my judge, I believe I would take her back were I sure she would come. But, would she come? Ah! I fear not. Love is not always enduring. After being cast off as I cast her, very, very few women would come back, even if begged on bended knee."

Yet he realized that he did not fully know Leone. He had learned some new characteristic of her each of the happy days that had followed their marriage, and yet knew comparatively little of her—only knew that she was the queen of his heart—the one fair vision at whose shrine he worshiped. And he knew now that he must escape to protect her life, and that of their babe—*must* was the word that best fitted the occasion. Failure meant death to her, and the same to the prospects of his future happiness. He had resolved, now, to go back to her, and ask forgiveness, and if she still loved him—if even only a tenth part as much as he did her, she would grant the boon, for the sake of their baby boy.

Edith glided suddenly upon him, in the midst of his thoughts, like some haunting shadow.

"Oh! Dick!" she cried, kneeling beside him, and throwing her arms about his neck, with a passionate outburst of tears—"I love you so; oh! do please take me to your heart, and let us fly from here, to some spot where we can live as man and wife, in the fullness of our love. For the love of God, do not again put me off, for I do not want to commit this awful crime I have threatened."

"Nor need you," he replied, unable to restrain her from kissing him. "I do not love you, and life with you would be a torture."

"Ah! you love the other!" she cried, with almost tigerish ferocity, a terrible gleam reddening her eyes.

"Yes, I love the other," he replied, firmly, "and always shall."

"Then she shall die, and the brat, too."

"But their death will not make you any the better off," he reasoned. "I cannot marry you, in either case."

"What! would you see them murdered before your eyes, rather than give up your future to me?" "Yes, rather than become a bigamist, and promise devotion to a mad-woman!"

"A what?" she gasped, shrinking away from him. "A mad-woman—a maniac, for you are no man. Were you in your right mind, Edith, you would never think of such a crime."

"Mad! mad!" she repeated, staggering to her feet, and pressing her hand to her forehead, as if it ached—"yes, perhaps I am mad—mad in love; but sane enough that no other woman shall ever possess you, my Prince. I will look to that with a perseverance that will some time astonish you."

"It will be useless. Your life will be only spent in vain."

"So it shall be then. You will know no peace—that may in a measure appease my hunger for your love. I will haunt you day and night, like some terrible phantom. But, bah! why this parley? I can still win you by love, without resorting to harsher measures. See! I am going to free your limbs, until morning, that you may rest better. Do not try to escape, however, for Corkus stands yonder in the mouth of the cave with an Evans repeating rifle, and can put twenty bullets into you in less time than it takes to count them. So adieu."

With a long bow she cut the bonds about his feet, leaving his hands still confined.

"Thank you," he said. "Acts of kindness and confidence often produce great results."

"Bah!" she retorted, with a sarcastic laugh. "Don't think me a fool, or that you can deceive me. Maybe, by some of the infernal power you are said to possess, you can succeed in outwitting me. But I will follow you to the very ends of the earth. A very tigress you will find me, if you try to play any games on me. Remember!"

Then she turned and swept away with the imperiousness of a queen. Deadwood Dick lay still for several hours after her departure, well-knowing it would be useless to attempt to escape, until Corkus grew sleepy, and relaxed his vigil. But he worked silently at the bonds which confined his wrists. If he could but free his wrists, he had no fears but that he could escape.

"The suit of mail I wear beneath my clothing makes me bullet proof, unless the cuss should happen to aim at my visage, when I cannot say as to its qualities against resisting lead, though I've been called 'hard-cheeked' and 'brassy!' he muttered, a grim smile playing over his features.

Diligently he worked away, first soaking the thongs in a little pool of water which ran at his feet, and then endeavoring to stretch them. It was a slow process, but eventually successful, for in a couple of hours he rejoiced in the freedom of both hands.

"Now, I guess it is a safe time to make an attempt to quit this place," he muttered, tightening his belt,

and peering around into the gloom to see if his movements had been observed.

But apparently they had not. The intense blackness that reigned supreme within the cave had prevented his being seen. The fire had died out, and the only light was a faint leaden glow in the direction which marked the cave's entrance.

"I wonder if the villainous guard is asleep!" Dick queried, hesitating before starting. "I hope it don't come to a tussle, lest he should crush me in a hug, for he is as stout as a cinnamon bear. If I can only enchain his gaze for a moment, I am almost certain that I can mesmerize him, though he is strong bodied."

He stepped cautiously toward the entrance, his footfalls softer than those of a cat. His fists were doubled on the defensive, in the absence of other weapon; every nerve was strung, every muscle drawn hard; his whole mind devoted to the work before him.

Nearer and nearer he approached the entrance, his magnetic black orbs piercing the gloom as in search of something; his lips set firmly, a wrinkle in his forehead.

He expected to hear the report of the guard's rifle, each moment; was prepared to meet death in this venture, hardly expecting anything else.

Closer and closer he moved, until he caught sight of the shadowy outline of the sentinel, standing stationary in the entrance, grim and silent as some rock-carved statue.

His head was turned the other way, but Dick cared not for this. He stopped in his tracks, and threw the whole force of his mind into his gaze, which he directed at the guard. And not long had he to wait for the effect.

Soon the man shuddered, and turned around, his bloodshot eyes coming instantly in contact with the gleaming orbs of Deadwood Dick. His gaze became fixed.

It was no use for him to resist. He could not break the spell that came over him, from the peculiar influence of the road-agent's all-powerful gaze. Like a statue he was rooted to the spot, immovable, of his own will, and powerless to speak.

"Ha! ha!" Dick laughed, in a low voice. "this is another victory. Now, the next act on the schedule is to get out of this, find Leone and my boy, and then forever quit this place. I know of one spot in this great, fair earth, where even the bounds of the law scent not, and there I will go with mine own wife and child, and begin life anew!"

CHAPTER XVI.

PRIZE UPON PRIZE.

OLD AVALANCHE and Little Alf were not far away at the time when Bolton and Martha left the big lodging-house. They had seen Cambre enter, and were crouching in the bushes, not far away, waiting for the men to come with the babe, as they calculated they eventually would.

"Great ham-bone thet deceived old Joner!" the Annihilator exclaimed, as first they heard the pistol-shot, and later saw the man and woman descend the bed-quilt ladder to the ground and hurry away. "Old Moses thet perambulated through the bull-rushes! Reckon thar's bin a tussle in thet aire dormitory, an' Careless Cucumber hes got his crop full. Thet ain't enny o' our hash, tho'. Ther perlice individuals we're wantin', at present time, aire them two yakoots, one o' whom hes got a bag slung over his shoulder. Shouldn't be surprised ef they'd be along afore a great while."

"Likely," assented Coyle, nibbling away at the end of a piece of pipe tobacco, reflectively. "But I argue that we had better git inside o' thet barn or dormitory, as ye call it, fer it'll be easier nabbin' our larkies thar than out hayr in ther gulch, whar there's chance fer bullets ter skip around so free."

Accordingly they crossed the gulch, and entered the big lodging-house, which was dark and gloomy.

On the first landing they found Carlos Cambre lying, groaning and cursing alternately, over his inability to move on account of the painfulness of his wounded leg and broken arm.

"Hello! heer's a sojer dyin' on ther deserted battle-ground," the Annihilator cried, bending over the villain.

"By ther great allegorical ham-bone, it's Careless Cucumber, sure's there's condooement ter reason in ther argumint end uv a mule. I tell ye, et takes old Prudence Cordelia ter persuade a feller thet she's ticklish in her hind hoofs. Lord! she's scattered more gory brains over ther peraries o' thes peccoliar latytude, than all ther extinct Injun-fighters uv ther age. Many's ther time's she's slung a shoe off a-reachin' out wi' them hindmost tempins o' hern."

"Hello! what are you doin' here, pilgrim?" Little Alf demanded, of Cambre. "Seem ter be kinder out of tune, jedgin' frum yer music."

"I've been blown full of holes by a pair of knaves—a man and a woman!" the ex-road-agent replied, with a fresh torrent of blasphemy. "They're upstairs, somewhere, now. I'll give you a thousand dollars, if you will go and capture them, and get me back the papers they have stolen."

"Oh, will ye? Sorry ter say yer pigeons hev fled, my gallus coon—escaped by aid o' a bed-quilt ladder, an' flown away," the old man said. "Would ye like us ter assist ye ter yer palatial domicile?"

"Yes, help me somewhere to a bed, and send for a doctor," Cambre groaned. "I've more'n forty chunks o' lead in my carcass."

"Pooh! substract thirty-nine frum ther sum given, an' ye hev ther right figgers, ter a dot. Never know'd a rascal yet thet could tell ther truth. Thet, by ther way, war a great trait in the Hogg family. Thar wasn't a Hogg in ther hull collection o' Hogg's thet ked tell a falsehood ef they were ter try, 'ca'se

ye see, old Jerry Hogg, ther originator uv ther juvenile Hogg, war a Methodist preacher, an' we grew up ter regard ther truth as a thing more sacred than terbaccer or tarantler juice."

"Do you mean to say that I lie?" Cambre demanded, in a well assumed rage.

"Oh! no, my dear Careless; I never yit war guilty o' callin' a feller a liar. But, I swar, you look strangely like this great destructive eppydemic, when he pulls ther long bow!"

"I'd shoot you, if—" "You had the drop, w'ich you ain't!" was the grim response. "Alf, take away the sarptin's fangs, an' we'll carry him up-stairs, before them galoots cum w' ther babby!"

"Furies: what do you know about it?" the lieutenant demanded.

"All about it, geolorious Cucumber—that ye're expectin' ther consignment into your grub-hooks uv one male infant prodigy, by a couple o' as ornery dasted galoots as eyer absorbed ther moisture from Virginia barley. But fate ordained ther our desires she'd ruminate after ther same kid; wharfore we embraced the present opportunity to wisit you, an' take persession uv it, accordin' ter law."

Little Alf deprived the villain of his weapons, and then they carried him up to the room Bolton and Martha had recently ransacked, and laid him upon the bed.

Avalanche, then, with a skill that years of frontier life had perfected, set the broken arm, and dressed the wounded leg.

This relieved the unlucky plotter of some of his pain; but his rage was more intense than the pain when Avalanche securely gagged him, so that he could not utter a word.

This done, the two men seated themselves to await the coming of the two kidnappers.

And, fortune favoring them, they had not long to wait. Heavy footsteps were soon heard ascending the stairs, and presently two burly miners—the same the two scouts had seen before—entered the room, closing the door behind them. The next moment they were "covered" by the revolvers of Avalanche and his companion.

"Move an inch, without orders, and you're both dead corpses!" Little Alf exclaimed, sternly.

"Great salubrious ham-bone frum which old Joner manyfactured broth, yes!" put in Avalanche. "Ef yer don't want ter expeerience the eternal electric joke, jes' becum stationary, or I'll demolish ye, sure's this great devastatin' eppydemic luv's fun. I'll forever transfix ye w' glory, beattytudes, an' sich scriptural punishments!"

The two ruffians stood stock-still, glaring around them in astonishment. Such a trap they had not expected to fall into.

"Oh! we've got you!" Coyle joined in, triumphantly, "without a doubt, so just hand over yer weapons, and done with it."

"Fork 'em over," added Avalanche. "Seeing that they were in the power of the two scouts, the ruffians obeyed the command, by delivering up a pair of revolvers and a knife, apiece.

"Now, then, be kind eruff ter open that bag, and gently remove the baby," ordered the Annihilator, coolly. "No roughness, now, or I'll salivate ye w' lead fizzle fer all ye're worth."

With an angry growl the larger of the two men slung the bag from his shoulder, and deposited it upon the floor. Then he untied it, and took therefrom a little bundle of humanity, apparently fast asleep, with a bandage tied over its little mouth, to prevent its screams.

It was Deadwood Dick, Jr., sure enough, and Avalanche received it into his arms with a grin of delight. Coyle assisted him to remove the bandage, but as the operation did not awaken the little thing, they came to the conclusion that it had been drugged. But its respirations evinced the fact that it was rapidly wearing off the effects of the potion.

The two ruffians were now bound hand and foot, after which our two friends quitted the lodging-house, Avalanche having restored the babe to the bag, and slung it over his shoulder, to prevent attracting the attention of any one they might meet.

"Now we'll go back to Bonanza Basin, w' our prize!" he said. "I'll go on ahead, while you fetch Noisy Nell on ther back o' my mare Prudence."

"Why Noisy Nell?" Coyle asked.

"Why? Great ham-bone! won't she hev ter be ther mither o' this youngster, till we can find its gin-wine mother? Wish ter gracious my Florence Night-in-a-gale war uv ther tender sex, so we ked derive sum lacteal benefit out o' him fer thea little cuss. As et is, ye'll hev ter fetch along a bottle o' milk, I 'spect, unless et ken chaw venison."

"D'ye think et can?"

"Dunno. My experience w' ther babylonians ain't verrey much; but ef I remember, my old marm used ter feed me on pertaters an' unyuns."

"Waal, thet accounts fer yer smartness, then."

"Doubtless. Better ask ther gal w'at babies eat; she'd be apt ter kno' sumthin' about it."

"Who? Miss Brandon?"

"Yas—weemen fokes ginerally take more ter infants than men; they orter know."

After a few more words, Avalanche tramped away up the lonely gulch, while Alf turned back on his errand. He first got Prudence Cordella from the stable, and then went to the Man-Trap after Nelly, whom he found at her old post, and who was apparently very glad to see him.

They soon were out of the little town of Eureka, for Nelly had consented to go and care for Leone's baby, until Leone herself could be found.

On their arrival at Bonanza mine, they found that Avalanche had already got there ahead of them; and to their surprise found Leone there also, with her babe in her arms.

She told her story to all, as they gathered about the camp-fire.

She had pursued the two ruffians who stole Master Dick until they had puzzled and lost her in the intricacies of the mountain. Then it had taken her many long, weary hours to pick her way back to the mine, where she had at last arrived, only a few hours previous to the arrival of Avalanche with the babe, and Alf and Nelly.

That was a happy night at Bonanza mine—happy to Leone, in particular, because of something that promised her future happiness—the arrival of one, at the darkest hour before day-dawn, who of all men they least expected to see—the Prince of the Road of those bygone days in the Black Hills—Deadwood Dick!

He came stalking unexpectedly into camp, his form erect and face calm; he stopped in the playing firelight, and gazed around him, his eyes resting upon Leone and her babe.

The little woman had grown deathly pale at first, but she threw off the faintness that had attacked her by a mighty effort, and rose to her feet, trembling violently, an appealing look in her eyes. Nelly had taken Master Dick, and the husband and wife stood once more face to face.

"Leone!" Deadwood Dick said, opening his arms, "I have come."

She gave a low, glad cry of joy, and springing into his embrace, burst into tears. But they were tears of ecstatic joy; how shall we ever attempt to describe the happiness and love that then filled those two reunited hearts?

Tenderly Deadwood Dick caressed her; it seemed now that life once more had a future; that he could ever be supremely happy in the love of this glorious little creature whose undying affection had so well stood the test. He had never known the depth of his own love until the hour of this gladsome reunion; he realized how he had wronged, and pained her; and now with her clasped close to his fast-beating heart, he swore a silent vow that in the future by kindness and strong true love he would atone for all their mutual unhappiness in the past.

Leone was happy, Dick was happy, and so were all about the camp-fire, when they saw the young ex-outlaw and his true loving wife reunited. Little Dick took immediately to his new-found papa, and seemed by instinct to know it was his papa. And thus general joy prevailed.

After the first rapturous greetings were over, due explanations were made all around, Deadwood Dick coming in last on the list.

"And what hev ye bin doin' w' yerself, since the night I left ye, on our arrival in Eureka?" Avalanche asked of the Prince.

"Well, I will tell you. I fled from the town, after laying out the sheriff, and hid for a couple of days in the mountains which flank one side of this gulch. The first day I spent thus, I made a discovery—discovered the man, Red Brand, robed in ghostly robes, and parading upon a rocky plateau. The hour was just at dusk, and having heard, previous to our coming to Eureka, of the Phantom Miner, I put this and that together, and came to the conclusion that Red Brand and the Phantom Miner were one. Of course I grew interested, and from my hiding-place I watched."

"By and by two burly men dragged the toggery of a large balloon out upon the plateau, and over a natural gas geyser close at hand, inflated the concern, which was of goodly size, and attached to it a car capable of holding four or five persons. When all was in readiness, the two men let go the grapple, and sprung into the car, and rose slowly upward. Then I saw the secret of the whole business, plain enough."

"A rope was attached to the car upon a windlass, and also to Red Brand, around his body, in under his feet and arms, so that when the full length, of about a thousand feet, had spun from the reel, he was raised upward and borne through the air. In the night his means of flight through the air is a mystery, unless the observer has an eye keen enough to penetrate far toward the heaven, where, in what is known as the semi-counter-current—meaning four currents blowing to a center—the balloon is drifting. The balloon rises or lowers at will, by use of a lever escape-valve, and ballast; if allowed to rise above the concentrating current, it moves north toward the place of starting; if lowered below the said current, it goes sou'-westward toward the prairies. In the daytime the Phantom is not seen abroad, and I think this successfully explains what has been a mystery to the ites of Eureka."

"And this Red Brand is the Phantom?"

"Was, until I adopted his role. We accidentally met, one day later, and he told me of my knowledge of his secret, though the Lord only knows how he found it out. He declared his hate for me, and proposed that we fight it out."

"If I won, I was to Phantomize it in his stead. Well, we dueled, and I won."

A piercing scream came from Noisy Nell.

"And was he killed?" she gasped.

"Yes, young lady. I know—he was your father, and I have in trust for you a thousand dollars in gold, which he had secretly mined from the basin."

"And you, then, are the ghost thet robbed us?" Avalanche said.

"Yes, by the mesmeric power which I possess, I mesmerized you in the tunnel, and later robbed the camp. It was to try the experiment. You may have observed what seemed to be a finger of my hand, the end of which glowed like a human eye. It was simply an ingeniously-contrived bull's-eye-lantern, one side appearing like an eye, and the opposite, by means of a small but powerful reflector, casting around my person a phosphorescent halo."

Then Dick made further explanations, mentioning

that the skeleton shape and rattles were all ingenious contrivances of Red Brand's originality; also all concerning Red-Hot Harris and Deadwood Dick No. 2, which caused a great deal of surprise. This is all known to the reader.

He also explained the secret of his invulnerability, by exhibiting a suit of mail worn beneath his garb, which he had found on the body of Red Brand.

A week was spent in Bonanza Basin, quietly, no intrusions from the Eurekaites making it necessary for Dick to fly. Happy was he with his wife and child, and a prime favorite in camp.

During the week old Fordyce Grayford died, and by Bolton's arrangement, Dick and his new-found mother, Cathie, were present. The old man relented in the last hours, and asked the forgiveness of his wronged ones, and made over all his property, at Dick's request, to Cathie. Dick did not wish any of it. Though the story of how Cathie had left him with the Harrises in infancy, and the proofs, seemed all genuine, he could not quite make it seem that she was his mother, and he avowed it his intention to still retain the name of Harris.

At the expiration of the week he made a sale of Deadwood Dick's Bonanza to Little Alf and Keno Bill; then, with his wife and child, and the two aeronauts, one morning he sailed away over the silver land of Idaho, in his balloon, the "Leone," for a land of the West, where he hoped to bury himself forever, and the bitter past.

Later, Keno married Martha Cambre, the little female detective, who had obtained a legal divorce from her rascally husband, and at the same time Nelly Brandon took the name of Coyle. Cathie Grayford, also, after a period of mourning, took Bolton, the attorney, for a permanent legal director.

Cambre suddenly disappeared from Eureka, and with him went a fit associate, bullying Cal Buckskin, while Roxly returned to Deadwood, disheartened over the unfruitfulness of his mission, so nearly resulting in his death.

With Deadwood Dick went that "devastatin' eppydemic," Old Avalanche, and his goat. Prudence was left behind, for want of room in the balloon.

They are supremely happy, Dick and Leone, but occasionally there rises before the vision of the ex-outlaw, like a haunting of the future, the malignant face and menacing gleaming eyes of the bitterest of all his foes, Edith Stone!

Nor is this the end of Deadwood Dick's career; we have simply written to a happy conclusion of the PHANTOM MINER.

THE END.

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